

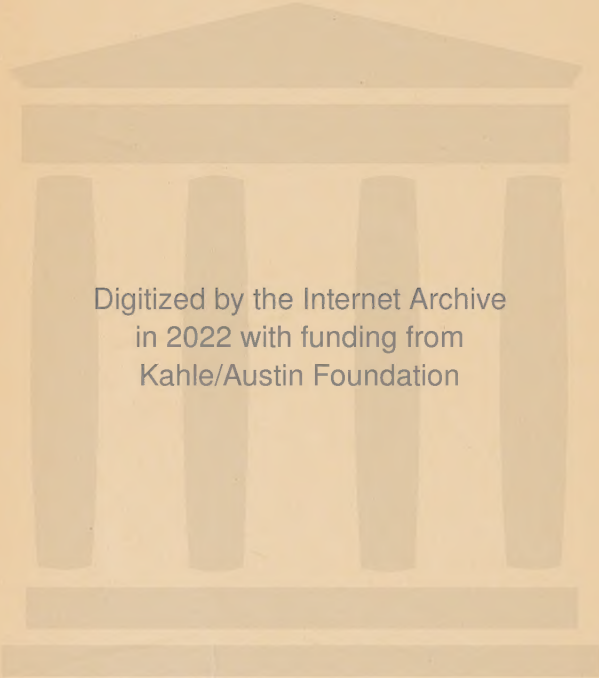
Horizons

And Other Sermons

Marion Law

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HORIZONS
AND OTHER SERMONS

HORIZONS

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE
REV. MARION LAW, D.D.

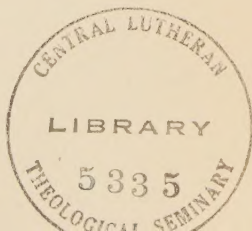
Author of "Visions"

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TO MY
FATHER AND MOTHER

FOREWORD

THE writer of this book ventures again into the field of authorship.

His first volume, *Visions*, was sufficiently well received to seem to justify a second attempt. The discourses herein contained were delivered not only in the writer's own pulpit at St. Paul's, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, but also in various churches on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Auditors, in many cases, have asked for them in printed form. Many readers of *Visions*, also, have asked for another volume. Hence this book, which, it is hoped, will impart faith, courage, hope, and new resolve to those who seek to walk in the Christian way of life.

TO LAY READERS

The same layman who presented *Visions* to every lay-reader who expressed a desire for it makes the same proffer of *Horizons*. His stated purpose is to do his part in this manner toward the spread of the Gospel of the Son of God,

which, he believes, "will solve every human problem whether personal, social, national, or international."

The author desires again to suggest to lay-readers what he believes the best manner of using these sermons in their work.

1. A lay-reader will find it well worth while either to write or type his sermons for public use. This will familiarize him with the text and give him far greater ease and effectiveness in delivery.

2. It will be found very desirable for the lay-reader to read his discourse aloud two or three times before using it in public—once, if possible, in the church wherein he expects to deliver it.

3. If he considers any sermon in this book too long, he can easily omit portions he esteems less important or he may divide some of the discourses herein into two parts to be used, preferably, on succeeding occasions.

The average time consumed in reading these sermons is 15 to 20 minutes. The writer believes this is not too long, that any subject worth discussing at all should easily hold the attention of a congregation for that length of time. The "ten-minute sermon" (if it may be called a sermon) he considers rather an affront to the intelligence of a church attendant.

Surely those sufficiently interested in religion to desire to attend worship are not so feeble in intellect that a 20-minute discourse will exhaust them. Any subject worth discussing at all would seem to merit more than the 10-minute "tabloid" sermon which is advised in some quarters. We think better of most Christians today than that.

The highest and truest success to your efforts—is the wish of the writer.

This is the second volume by the author; a third is in preparation. If lay-readers desire that another be published they can help by giving to any one wishing to purchase this book the name of the publishers, of whom it may be had, postpaid, for \$1.12.

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WORDS OF GREAT MEN

DR. MICHAEL PUPIN of Columbia University, a world famous scientist, says:

"Science does not prevent a man from being a Christian; but makes him a better Christian—has made me a better Christian. My religion does not contradict a single element of the religion my mother taught me."

We do not need more national development, we need more spiritual development. We do not need more intellectual power, we need more spiritual power. We do not need more law, we need more religion. We do not need more of the things that are seen, we need more of the things that are unseen.—Calvin Coolidge.

In what light soever we regard the Bible, whether with reference to revelation, to history, or to morality, it is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue.—John Quincy Adams.

There are no songs comparable to the songs of Zion; no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics like those which the Scriptures teach.—Milton.

It is belief in the Bible, the fruit of deep meditation, which has served me as the guide of my moral and literary life. I have found it a capital safely invested, and richly productive of interest.—Goethe.

I have always said, I always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands.—Jefferson.

INTENTION

THE DISCOURSES *in this book are intended chiefly as an endeavor to help restore the faith of Christians who have been disturbed in greater or less measure by the attacks of sceptics. Advice to this effect was recently given by Edison. The writer here makes his contribution.*

LAY-READERS

YOU ARE URGED *to read directions to lay-readers (in the Foreword) before using these discourses in public.*

* * * * *

HORIZONS

EDISON concedes immortality—that is, that it *may* be true.

A few years ago he did not; and that fact was widely exploited by sceptics who now no longer will quote Edison, I imagine.

This change is interesting, especially as Burbank, our California plant wizard, died an unbeliever in immortality.

Both Edison and Burbank have been great benefactors to humanity. Americans are proud of them. We honor them for what they have done—the one in creating new fruits and improving others, the other for his many inven-

tions which have added so greatly to the convenience and comfort of living.

Yet while gladly conceding all this, the fact that one did *not* believe, and the other tells us we *may* now believe is not so important—because neither is a great scholar or thinker, has not claimed to be, and is not so considered by other scholars.

Their opinions concerning religion are not to be compared to those of Fiske or James of Harvard, Pupin of Columbia, or Howard Kelley of Johns Hopkins, all of whom I have often quoted as to their belief in immortality. Prof. Pupin says: "Science does not prevent a man from being a Christian; but makes him a better Christian."

But Edison, changing in viewpoint, advises the clergy to give all the evidence they can for faith in immortality.

In every congregation there must be those who have doubts—as I myself sometimes have. Therefore it seems to me wise, and helpful to others, to give reasons frequently for the hope that is in us. We Christians do not make it real enough to ourselves. It would almost appear we are afraid to think much about it. And surely we do not get the comfort, the strength, even the joy, we might and should get from our professed faith.

We all said in the Creed a few moments ago,
"I *believe* . . . in the life everlasting."

Do you?

Do I?

That is one of the greatest affirmations a human being can make. It ought to send us singing out of this church, and into life. This world not all: we shall live beyond life's visible horizon.

Think of it more, my hearers. Christ taught it. Never doubt it. It will give life courage and zest. So much by way of preface to my

TEXT.—"*Thy years shall have no end.*"—Psalms 102: 27.

Some years ago a college friend and I climbed Pike's Peak. We made the ascent at night, that we might arrive for sunrise. It was a glorious moonlight night and we arrived at the top, nearly 15,000 feet above sea-level, just at dawn. The sun arose a few minutes later.

It was a magnificent sight, as any one who has been there knows full well. To the eastward, as far as the eye can see, stretch the illimitable plains of what was once called the Great American Desert but has been re-named the Great American Plateau; to the westward, range after range of snow-capped mountains. The gigantic peaks reached to the distant horizon. It was like a storm-tossed sea of snow-

crested waves, suddenly frozen into immobility.

He who is not inspired by such a scene is dull and insensate indeed. A thousand emotions crowd in upon you; but chiefly—the impression of immensity, the far flung sweep of the horizon, the overwhelming bigness of this world in which we live.

We saw more of this earth at that moment than we had ever seen before. We seemed to be standing on the very top of the world. I turned to one beside me and said: "After all, this is a pretty big world in which we live."

He responded: "Yes, but only a grain of sand in the immensity of the universe."

When you stand on a mountain top you have widened your horizon tremendously, depending of course on the height of the mountain. Indeed, as you ascend any elevation, with every step upward your horizon grows wider. For this reason the higher you ascend the more beautiful and interesting grows the landscape.

Is not this an excellent thought with which to begin every day—the thought that life is a constantly widening horizon, and that because of this it ought to grow more interesting as the years pass by? I do not say it always does, to everyone. Many view the oncoming years with reluctance. A woman of high culture once said to me that the one thing she looked upon

with terror was the coming of age—growing old. She was a Christian woman, too, but frankly admitted that her faith did not lessen her fear of age. But if this is true in any Christian life, it is, it must be, because we have not yet found the true secret, the right philosophy of Christian living.

For year by year we are scaling new heights of experience and observation. And year by year, therefore, we ought to see life more completely. We see it more as a whole because our horizon widens.

Horizons! Life's widening horizons! Go back to the days of your childhood and think of your childish horizon. Let me tell you of mine, for I think it will be in essentials like that of most who hear me speak.

In the little country town of my boyhood I could look from the window of my room across a broad valley several miles in extent. On the purple, far-distant sky-line a woodland was faintly visible. One giant tree, far taller than the others, rose balloon-shaped on that far horizon. I can see it all now in fancy, as I saw it then in fact—and saw it again not long ago, looking out of that same window across that same valley.

That was a child's horizon. But that was not all it meant to me. In boyish dreams, as I stood

by that window looking out on the world, and upon life, there was more, far more. For beyond that horizon of childhood lay all the great mystery of life—of the throbbing, bustling world wherein one day I expected to plunge and hoped to win riches, fame, and honor—all the world's great prizes as they seemed then.

Often I looked out upon that distant skyline and pictured in imagination the great cities beyond it. I saw as in a dream the busy haunts of men, the traffic on a score of railways, great seaports and lakeports, all crowded with hurrying ships. In this I hoped and expected one day to take a part. Then, too, there was infinite charm in the mystery of it all—the great unknown world beyond that boyhood horizon; the mystery of it impressed me deeply and drew me irresistibly.

Does not this touch a responsive chord in many hearts? Are there not those here today who have memories like this, memories of those unsullied childhood days—when life was so fresh, alluring, and the future so mysterious and inviting?

Today the years have passed in their certain onward flight. We have gone beyond that horizon of childhood into the life which lay before us, then so hopeful and wonderful.

And what have we found?

Some have found fulfillment; others, many, have found disillusionment and disappointment. Some have found grief and tears, perhaps such sorrow that life has sometimes scarce seemed worth the living. Some have met failure. Others have achieved success even beyond those youthful visions. But *all* have found some bitter with the sweet; for that is a part of the discipline of this world and of our present life.

What then, brethren, if we have found the bitter? Shall we, because life has not brought us all the joy and success we anticipated, say that it is a failure and give up hope? Shall we, because griefs have come and tears have dimmed the eye, and perhaps dear ones on whom we had centered life's hopes and happiness have been taken—or worse, have proven unworthy—shall we, because of these things, allow our lives to become morbid and despondent and broken?

Not if we are Christians, and are worthy of the Christian name. Christ has a better philosophy of life than that. Look still to the horizon, and confidently hope for what may be beyond it. Even though the snows are on the head and the body worn with toil and the weight of years, remember that God has still another horizon beyond this one of earth. He has said in our text today, "Thy years shall have no

end." He has promised to us life beyond this world—a life as intense, vital, and real as this present one. Our Christian faith teaches it is a life where tears are wiped away and partings shall be no more. We Christians do not value nor rest upon that promise half as much as we should—as we might. Cherish that hope. Try hard to make it real. Never give it up. Cling to it as the wrecked mariner clings to a spar,—for this world is bleak, cheerless, and the future has no promise, except the hope be true that beyond that last horizon all tears shall be wiped away.

Think of each year as giving a new and wider horizon to your life, just as, when ascending a mountain, each time we pause and look about we find we have gained a wider outlook. Thus year by year we are ascending the hill of our earthly life, further and higher. Year by year new experiences enrich and enlarge our vision if we have eyes to see them. Year by year our horizon widens, should widen, may widen, so that the great drama of human existence of which we are a part grows of deeper and more absorbing interest, as it unfolds before us. Thus we keep the beautiful sense of the mystery of life, which so many lose as childhood passes.

Look back a moment over the years that are past, and ask yourself: "What have they

brought?" What greatest gift? What greatest grief? What new interests have been unfolded? What new friendships formed? What old friendships deepened—or perhaps in some cases abandoned for sufficient cause?

Some dear ones have gone from this world forever. New lives and new affections have come to us. One year ago you could have little foreseen or imagined, perhaps, what the past twelve months have brought you. Today we can as little foretell what coming years will bring—what new joys or sorrows, what new gains or losses, what further experiences of every kind, if in God's providence we continue in this present world another year.

All this is hidden by the merciful veil which obscures the future. But of this we may be certain; every year will open up to us a wider horizon if we will to see it. Each day with its coming scenes and events unrolls before us like a panorama of life, which in very truth and fact it is. New friends it may be are approaching us now, their lives to intermingle with ours and possibly to be near and dear for life. Thus far they may have been unknown to us—have lived their lives separated but a little distance from ours; possibly they have been so near that we might almost hear their footsteps and listen to their voices; yet their paths and ours

have never yet crossed. But in the fullness of time our paths meet, and perhaps go side by side in the future. Like two separate streams flowing for miles down near and adjacent valleys and at last uniting and flowing together toward the infinite expanse of the sea, so these other lives, now unknown to us, may be drawing near to ours, possibly to flow side by side with ours forevermore.

Such thoughts as these, my hearers, add to the intense interest of life, its unfailing mystery. They help one to realize that this present existence has ever a widening horizon and is bringing ever new and deeper interests to the soul of the thoughtful man.

Now all this has its deep spiritual significance. We who call ourselves Christians believe, in spite of the babble of materialists and the blasphemous denials of atheists, that this is God's world, and that our lives are in God's hands. We see no hope if this is not true. We believe in an over-ruling Providence which makes all things, eventually, work out for man's good and God's glory. We believe this even though we do not understand it all. We believe in God, and that He is training us in this world for a larger life beyond. We believe that each year of this life is in reality a school year for us. If we look thus upon it we will regard every

year past in all its vital experiences as lessons in this school of life—some hard, others not so hard, but all necessary in God's plan for our soul's education. In my days of teaching I can recall some pupils crying over hard lessons they thought they could never understand, yet which in time became as plain as day to them. May it not be so with us?

What a noble conception is this!

Year by year we are ascending the hill of life, ever viewing wider horizons, seeing and learning more. This body in which we live grows and strengthens year by year, until we pass the meridian of physical life and go into the afternoon and toward the eventide. But not so the *real* man in the body. Your soul, the *you*, is ageless, and each year is another step upward; each year we should have a wider horizon and achieve a deeper faith that God is, and is doing all things well.

That, simply, is what our Christian faith *ought* to mean to us; and life is bleak and gray if it does not. That is what God our Father intends life to mean to us. And what dignity and value and perspective it adds to it!

But with many who call themselves Christians it does not seem to mean this. We hear men and women speak of their dread of growing old. It would be a splendid thing if the on-

coming years brought no such dread fear to us, if we had no regrets that we are growing older, but found life always more interesting and fuller of the deepest joys, even when the snow falls upon the head, the steps grow slower, and the sun declines toward the west. That is a high ideal; some would call it impossible; but that is what our faith means, what it does for those who find the inner secret of the Most High.

Surely, he who could impart to us the power to look thus upon the passing years would give us one of the greatest gifts that we could possibly receive. For how many, rather how few, do not fear the coming of age? Isn't it supremely worth while to learn thus to look upon earthly existence,—a widening horizon, leading to larger life beyond?

And yet, I declare to you,—*this is exactly* what Christ means to give us. If ever I spoke words of heartfelt conviction I speak them when I say that the Christian who has found the kernel of his faith ought not to and will not fear the passing of the years. He will look upon them rather as bringing him wider views of knowledge and of life—as bringing him nearer that larger life Christ has so fully promised, to which He ascended, where He now dwells, and which God is so abundantly able to give, even as He gave us this present life. For He who

gave this life surely can give us larger life.

Therefore the Christian should say, should school himself to say: I will not allow myself to fear the passing years. I will not dread the coming of age, for it implies doubt of God's goodness. We are all in God's hands. He doeth all things well. He careth for us—for *me*. Rather will I look upon life as a constantly enlarging thing, each year a wider horizon—with new scenes, new interests, new friends, and new experiences coming to me as the panorama of my life unfolds. The years that have passed are gone, with all their joys and sorrows, their smiles and tears; but He who gave life, my Maker, is also my Father; and the years that are coming are to be better years because they will reveal wider horizons of life, more of interest, more of God's truth and beauty, and fuller trust in Him in dealing with the sons of men.

That is a wonderful philosophy of living and well worth striving for with all the power we possess.

And that is—simply—Christianity.

But if life is to be thus hopeful, helpful, and courageous, it must be full—not empty; thoughtful—not trivial; ever deeper—not shallow. We must not *kill* time, but *fill* it, for time is the stuff life is made of. Therefore, never,

never speak of killing time. Fill it. Your life can never become empty unless you permit it.

That is the chief thought of this discourse. It bears repeating:

Your life can never become empty unless you permit it.

The years cannot bring that terrible fear of age if we meet them with the calm and courageous spirit that befits a true Christian. Christ came to this world to take away *all* fear, all the bondage of fear, from our lives. It is written, "fear hath torment"; and a good God does not will that we live in torment. We will it, or at least permit it, if we do. Thus may we find the true secret of living, the only fountain of perpetual youth, until we reach that life wherein Christ dwells, where there is neither youth nor age.

This world the school—life beyond the university; this body life's present garment—that body, differing yet identical, its eternal vestment; this world's ever-widening horizons its present outlook, beyond the veil the illimitable horizons of eternity.

Grasp that truth, my hearers. Hold it fast.

Then age has lost its terrors; the passing years will hold no vain regrets. And as we move onward in our journey, as we climb the steep and often rugged path while the years pass by

—just as we two college boys climbed Pike's Peak—we will be sustained by an unfaltering trust that "He doeth all things well." His peace, His surely promised peace, will descend like a benediction upon our troubled, tempestuous lives. He said—the words are old but they can never become trite—He said, "My peace I give unto you." Then He adds, "Not as the world giveth." Why? Because the world's peace and joys are unstable, everchanging, come and go with varying conditions and events: founded on uncertain worldly circumstances. "Not as the world giveth, give I peace unto you." Therefore "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Many have seen what is said to be the greatest of moving pictures—*Ben Hur*.

It was my good fortune to meet General Lew Wallace, author of *Ben Hur*, and hear him tell how he happened to write the book.

He said: "One Christmas eve several years ago I walked down Fifth Avenue, New York City, about midnight. It was a beautiful starry night, and as I looked up at one particularly bright star I thought, 'That might be the star of Bethlehem.' Then the thought came, 'Why not write a tale centering about the Christ?' I was inclined to be agnostic, but had always

wanted to try to write, and the dramatic possibilities of the theme took strong hold of me. During that walk I resolved to write, and outlined crudely the outline of the story. It was written at irregular intervals during my duties as an army officer. The chariot race was written on a drumhead (for a table) while camping in the Arizona desert on army duty."

Then he continued: "May I say a personal word? When I began the book I was a sceptic. But during the writing, in my study of Holy Writ, my other reading, and my reflection, I became a convinced Christian. For I saw in this matchless Life—this Man who spake as never mere man spake—not merely the human, but the Divine. Today I believe Him very God of very God and profess myself His earnest disciple."

That is a wonderful witness of the drawing power of the Cross. I give it, as Edison advises, to try to confirm our faith in the religion which teaches immortality.

Another instance. In the great Public Library of New York City, at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, is a room given over to the pictures of one artist, Tissot. His series of paintings depicting the life of Christ are priceless, of world wide fame.

It is said that when Tissot went to the Holy

Land to get atmosphere for these pictures, he was an unbeliever, a London club-man, worldly, pleasure-loving, living a trivial life.

He went to tread the steps the Saviour trod. He walked in Nazareth, by the sea of Galilee, stood on the hill where once were three crosses, steeped himself in the Gospels—and then painted those wonderful pictures. Mark—he too came out a Christian. His study of the life and words of Christ made him a believer.

Still another: In the library of any lawyer you will find a book by Greenleaf, a great English barrister, on Laws of Evidence. He is an authority. I asked a judge of this city if this were not true. He said it is. Greenleaf, a sceptic, sat down to write a book to confound Christians—by a comparative study of internal contradictions of the four Gospels. Greenleaf finished the book, but its title then was *The Truth of the Gospels from Internal Evidences*. These were chiefly what is termed undesigned coincidences.

Thus we see three great men made Christians by honest study of the Christ. There are many, many others.

And these I give to try to confirm our faith in the Christ—whose divinity is shown in that He forgave sin, accepted worship, and made Himself equal with the Father. He also said,

"I go to prepare a place for you,"—which can mean nothing else and nothing less than immortality. Further, He said, "If I be lifted up I will draw all men"; behold these words fulfilled in the three instances just given, Lew Wallace, Tissot, Greenleaf.

Brethren, be not afraid to believe.

For faith in immortality, alone, makes life worth while. Nay more, such faith can put a song on the lips, and a song in the heart, even when life's inevitable sorrows weigh the spirit down. This is God's world. We are His children. He has not forgotten His world. He bids us lift up our hearts, and lift up our eyes to the heavens which declare the glory of God. He tells us this life's horizon is not the end; beyond it lies the splendor of that larger life, of immortality. He has promised that fuller life—where this world's withheld completions shall be fulfilled and our souls' deep longings satisfied. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but He tells us we shall be satisfied.

God has promised. God *can* fulfill.

God is good, and therefore God *will* fulfill.

Thy years shall have no end. And around you, above you, beneath you, are the eternal arms of Him who said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," and "I go to prepare a place for you."

PHANTOMS

WE AMERICANS have the right to be proud, justly proud, of our hero, Lindbergh.

Here is a young American, a mere boy, who seems to be almost, if not quite, an ideal of all a young man should be.

In a sense he has all the world at his feet today. The question comes to me, as no doubt it has come to others—will it last?

We all hope it will. But let us not forget Dewey, Roosevelt, Wilson, all of whom we first placed on a pinnacle and then dashed them down. That was not a spectacle of which any American can be proud, though all these just mentioned regained in time the high esteem of their fellow-citizens—so easily won and lost.

But Lindbergh! How proud we are not only of his great achievement but his subsequent good sense and balance! First pursued by movie exploiters, he turned them down. In the presence of royalty he was courteous but evidently

not overwhelmed. At the great English races he did not gamble. He never drinks. When in college he would not accept proffered help financially, but worked his way.

Here is the very best in manhood that life can produce. I confess he thrills me. As an American I am proud of him. I hung out my flag twenty-four hours and blew my auto horn an hour when I first heard the news of his achievement. Then when I heard that he refused the movie exploiters who tried, as they always do, to capitalize him and make money out of the free advertising he could bring them, then I cheered, all by myself.

He was modest, simple, calm, and balanced amidst all the adulation heaped upon him, speaking with good sense and sanity, bearing himself like a clear-headed, wide-awake young American.

So it was not surprising to learn, later, that in college he declined proffered financial help, but went through "on his own."

Best of all he put the stamp of disapproval on the plan of his countrymen to give him a million dollars—saying he had not earned it and did not want it.

Fellow Christians, and fellow citizens, we have a right to be proud.

He is the type my text illustrates. He trained

himself for a great race and won. St. Paul says in our

TEXT.—“*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Every man that striveth for mastery is temperate in all things. I therefore so run, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.*”—I Cor. IX, 24-25-26.

An American poet sings:

“The gay will laugh when thou art gone,
The solemn brood of care plod on,
And each one, as before,
Pursues his favorite phantom.”

Beautiful words are those. And true as beautiful: They are Bryant's—from his most famous poem, *Thanatopsis*. That poem was written when Bryant was but a boy of nineteen. It is an amazing production of poetical genius, because, though written by one so young, it displays a philosophical view of life which would seem more natural from one of three score and ten—one on whose head the snows of declining years had fallen, and for whom life's afternoon was hastening toward the sunset. We call it genius when one so young can write such words. And genius is an unaccountable mystery, though one great genius has defined it as simply the capacity for hard work and infinite pains.

The thought behind these lines is the slight importance of each individual life. It is not a pleasing thought to most of us—certainly not

flattering to our vanity. Our individual lives are tremendously important to ourselves; we do not like to think of them as these words imply.

And indeed, greatly as I admire the poem *Thanatopsis*, I cannot fully agree in its philosophy. It is not anti-Christian, but is wholly non-Christian in its teaching. It might have been written by one of the old pagan philosophers. Against its teaching of the little importance of each human life, put this assertion of Christ—"Not a sparrow falleth," without the Father's knowledge; and then His question, "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?"

But this discourse is not a literary analysis of the poem *Thanatopsis*. The subject is introduced because of one significant phrase—"favorite phantom." "Each one (after thou are gone) will, as before, pursue his favorite phantom."

What means that expression, "favorite phantom"? What is it to pursue a phantom? What is a phantom?

A phantom is a ghost; a thing unreal, intangible, non-substantial.

Many people see ghosts and chase phantoms most of their lives.

Those who see ghosts are, for one thing, the

people who worry needlessly, weakening their vital powers, inviting disease thereby, and shortening their lives by setting to work as it were thousands of little hammers, beating steadily on their brain tissue. A great physician gave that figure and says that is the physical result of worry. He affirms that worry thus makes the brain an easy prey to apoplexy, and similar deadly illnesses. This is no phantom, but fact. Worry is not only useless and unavailing, but it invites disease, particularly apoplexy.

People who see ghosts or phantoms where there are no ghosts are those who "build bridges" over streams they never cross. We all have heard of these. Some of us have had to live with them—which is not pleasant. I have known those who appeared worried not only about the bridges they might sometime possibly have to cross, but who even worried about the seed to plant the trees, to grow up and be cut into timber, to build the bridges, to cross the streams which there was not one chance in ten thousand they would ever have to cross.

The world is full of people who thus worry, see ghosts, trouble themselves, lose their rest, injure their health, impair their efficiency, and weary others by needless worry over things which never happen.

But also, many men and women—most of

us at some period in our lives and some of us all our lives—are pursuing phantoms—favorite phantoms.

Meaning just what?

Meaning that most of us either are pursuing things we will never attain, or which if we do attain them are not worth the struggle. We run a race, but we run uncertainly. We fight battles, but often as one that beateth the air. St. Paul in our text was giving mighty good advice to those Christians down in Corinth, and equally good advice to us. Comparing life to a race run for a prize, he said: "They that struggle must be temperate," and added, "*I* run—not as uncertainly. I fight, but not as one that beateth the air." So you see St. Paul was not fighting ghosts; he was not pursuing phantoms. He knew his great life purpose, and entered the race of the Christian life as an athlete enters a contest. He ran, not uncertainly, not as one who knew not why he was running, or what his destination. He fought, not as one that beateth the air, but he fought the good fight of Christian discipleship and faith and self conquest. That is splendid counsel to a world full of men and women who do fight as those who beat the air, who do run uncertainly, who do pursue phantoms.

Are you and I among them? Do you and I

see ghosts? Do we pursue phantoms? Do we run the race of life uncertainly? Do we fight as those who beat the air? Just what are we after?

In other words, what is our heart's dearest desire, our greatest life wish, our Pearl of Great Price—as we esteem it?

There are, no doubt, a great many people who never think of these things very seriously, who never face themselves, never in silence and solitude think out a life philosophy. It is amazing how many are content to live merely a surface life, to live from day to day with no large vision of life as a whole, no glance backward to note the path already trod and mark mistakes therein, no glance forward to penetrate as far as possible what the future seems likely to bring, thus learning from the past to guide their steps for the future.

We know there are many who, on the physical plane, live what is sometimes tersely called a hand-to-mouth existence; when the hand to-day can grasp life's physical necessities they are satisfied. Even the lower animals have reached this plane of mere physical struggle for existence. Some men and women unhappily are forced by hard environment to live thus. All their powers physical and mental are exhausted in solving the bread and butter ques-

tions; but there are thousands, millions, who are *not* forced to live thus, but who *do* live thus. There are thousands who by foresight and frugality and prudence could rise to better things, while only a chosen few do. With those content thus to live a hand-to-mouth existence my words will have little meaning.

But to those on a higher mental and spiritual level, to those who look beyond today and tomorrow, down the long vista of coming years, to them my words should bear a message. For real Christians do seek to learn from past mistakes. All men make mistakes, but the hopeless ones never seem to learn by them. Christians do, or should—and believe in and strive for a better future.

What is it all for—this life? What is and what should be our aim? What is the race and what the goal? Have we chosen definitely and carefully our great life purpose? If so, is it worthy of a man made in God's image?

There is the man who has chosen riches—and his name is Legion. This world is to him simply and wholly a place to make money. He would pile it up, thousand upon thousand, million upon million if he can. Suppose he succeeds—though where one does, thousands fail. But let us say he succeeds—what is his reward? In many cases he has lost all capacity for en-

joying his millions while accumulating them. Have not most of us personal knowledge of such? Many use the golden years of life, with their freshness and sweetness, in a steady grind. Perhaps they have debauched their own souls and hardened their hearts by dishonest practices—keeping within the bounds of what Roosevelt called law-honesty, but violating the principles of real honesty.

What has such a man for his toil and wealth?

He has obsequious deference; not respect or affection, but a deference which he well knows is a strictly commercial article, gauged by the size of his tips. It is a tribute, not to the man, but to his dollars. He has legions of those whom he calls friends, but there lurks ever in his consciousness the feeling that he knows not who among them are real friends and how many would forget him at once if he lost his wealth. His children are often worthless—not always; I do not say that. But I do say that in many, the majority of cases of the very rich, the children amount to little or nothing; the world is no better because they live, would be no poorer without them. Go over in your own mind the children of the very rich you know and ask yourself if this is not too often true. How many of them are of real service to humanity, or would be greatly missed?

It could not be otherwise. The moral certainty of inheriting great wealth nearly always paralyzes ambition in the next generation. The possession of all one wants, without effort, weakens the will and destroys the moral fiber. Read the Paris divorce records and note the disgraceful accounts of rich Americans, living on money their parents foolishly gave them, and note the result that wealth has on the second generation.

It is eternally true that money cannot buy the best things. Nothing can do that but real worth. Nothing will make character but struggle; and the man who amasses wealth in order that his children need have no struggle is unintentionally his children's deadliest enemy. Furthermore, if the Scripture speaks the truth, he is a fool; for we read in the words of Christ Himself of the man who lived for money, and to whom God said, "Thou fool." Then when he is gone we see fulfilled the truth that our Church repeats so wisely in her Burial office, "Man heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them"; whether his own children, or dishonest lawyers, or shrewd and thieving financiers, or gamblers, or even harlots.

We know this is likely to be the fact if things go as they often do—as they have in many well-known cases of America's rich men's sons whose

folly is constantly rehearsed before the courts of this land. There is rarely a time that some prominent case of this kind is not in the public eye. I could name a half-dozen this moment which would be familiar to all, though in justice let it be said that in a few cases of great wealth in American families this is not true.

But the man who runs the race for great wealth is usually chasing phantoms, though the attainment of modest competence for declining years is commendable when one is willing to pay the price, which is industry and frugality.

Thus with many of the things men pursue. They are phantoms which turn to dust and ashes if and when they are achieved. The man who lives merely for pleasure does not permanently find it. Pleasures pall when cheaply won, or when too frequently indulged. The pleasure-seeker does—what? He eats when he is not hungry, drinks when he is not thirsty, rests when he is not weary. A Roman Emperor, Nero, once offered a princely fortune to the man who could discover a new pleasure. Yet any man can find pleasure—and also happiness—whenever he is willing to pay the price. It is not a price in money, but is this: doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.

So with the man who pursues fame, social

distinction, or any of the world's gawds and baubles. None of these things bring permanent joy or enduring satisfaction, and few bring anything but a fleeting pleasure.

It is well said, "There is no royal road to learning." The only road to learning is brain-sweat and perseverance. Much more there is no royal road to life's deepest and most permanent joys. The Proverb says, "Wisdom cryeth in the streets," but men will not hear. Blind, foolish, perverse, wilfully ignorant, they run the same race their ancestors ran—in vain. They pursue phantoms; they fight aimlessly, as those who beat the air, and at last win nothing but leaves—emptiness, wasted years behind them, no satisfaction of a well-stored mind, no splendid and eternal hope for the future.

And all this, my brethren, because men seek amiss in searching for happiness. They have not worked out a true philosophy of life. They have not interpreted life's highest destiny; and thus, weary and heavy-laden,

"The solemn brood of care plods on
And each—pursues his favorite phantom,"

as our poet says in the words already quoted.

But there came One to this world who said, "Come unto Me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

These words mean a new and nobler inter-

pretation of life, a new philosophy. They mean that He who spoke them was life's greatest Interpreter, and, we Christians believe, the world's Redeemer, the divine Son of God.

I like to think of Christ thus, as the great Interpreter of this life which is a puzzle to so many. All Christ's names are beautiful. As we think of them each one seems best. He is called the Saviour, the Redeemer, Emmanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, our Elder Brother, even—infinite condescension—He called Himself our Friend.

But this name seems to me among the best—Interpreter. Christ, the Interpreter of life.

How does He interpret life?

Well, for one thing He tells us by His apostle St. Paul not to pursue phantoms, not to fight as those who beat the air—for nothing, or things worth less than nothing.

Christ says there must be one thing supreme and absolutely first, then all other things will follow and fall into place. We must first choose a philosophy of life. We must *think it out*, arrive at the day and hour and moment when we make a choice.

That choice (if we find life's deepest peace and joy) must be for God. "Choose first," He says, "the kingdom of God"; then all things

we need will be added. And many things we *want* will be ours if—only *if*—they are best for us.

Surely if this is true it is supremely worth while, worth believing and living, if only we have the wisdom to choose it and the constancy to persevere. And pursuing it, we run, like St. Paul, *not* uncertainly. We fight, *not* as those who beat the air.

God first, and what follows?

Wealth? It may, if honestly won, in such measure as is best, and always to be used for God's glory.

Happiness and Pleasure? Yes, every *rightful* pleasure, temperately and in its rightful place. But to the Christian, pleasure cannot be the chief thing in life; pleasure must be, not the bread of life, but its condiment—never to excess (which destroys the pleasure) but always in temperance, which conserves it.

Social Position and Fame? Yes again, if honestly attained and always kept subordinate to God, who will be absolutely first in your life or will not be there at all. Never forget that.

In fact, brethren, in all the great, splendid, deep, and lasting satisfactions of life, those who let Christ interpret and guide them find not less but more satisfying and lasting joy. They pursue no phantom, run no needless race,

fight no empty air. But they run the straight course that Christ teaches, fight the good fight of the Christian soldier, and reap the just reward of the righteous—a life full and complete, an inner joy and peace in this world, and His positive promise that it shall extend into the world beyond the veil, where “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard—the things God hath prepared for those who love Him.”

All these things are the simple truths of real Christianity. How can any man fail to see their priceless worth and beauty, or neglect to seek them?

We who call ourselves Christians should covet these things. The apostle said, “Covet earnestly the best things.” Seek the things of God and His righteousness, for these alone will bring a man peace, peace in his soul, peace at the last. If with all our hearts we truly seek Him we shall ever surely find Him, and His peace on our journey through life. He gives also peace at the eventide, peace when the shadows lengthen and life’s sun is setting, peace through all eternity.

Brethren, let us ask ourselves this day, and demand our soul give answer—Am I pursuing phantoms? Have I made pleasure my God—or Wealth, or Fame, or Position, or anything save God Himself? And if our conscience tells

us we have, is not now the time and here before God's altar the place, highly to resolve, by God's help (which He is eager to give), to put first things *first* in our lives? For in our souls we know that Christ spoke absolute truth when He said, "Choose first the Kingdom of God."

Then, in the words of Charlotte Elliot, set to beautiful music in our Church hymn:

"When Satan flings his fiery darts
I look to Thee, my terrors cease.
Thy cross a hiding place imparts,
Thou art my peace."

and

"Standing alone on Jordan's brink
In that tremendous latest strife,
Thou wilt not suffer me to sink
Thou art my life." Amen.

BENDING BEFORE THE STORM

TEXT.—“*Submit yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God.*”—1 Peter V, 6.

STANDING at the gateway of this great continent is a noble and colossal statue, Liberty Enlightening the World. In New York harbor this statue is placed. From its commanding position, as well as from its immense size, the statue of Liberty compels the attention of every eye that looks upon that harbor. There it stands, nearly three hundred feet in height, like a protecting genius of this western world.

The statue is the figure of a woman. In her left hand is a scroll of law, indicating that all liberty must be under the law. In her right hand she holds aloft an enormous torch which at night is illuminated by an electric light of many thousands of candle power. She faces the east, looking toward the “narrows” leading to the Atlantic—which separates us from the old world. Liberty stands thus as though to welcome the incoming immigrants from the mon-

archies of Europe, welcoming them to the great continent behind her—the country which is, at least according to one of our national songs, “The land of the free and the home of the brave.”

It is a most beautiful and impressive thing, this statue of “Liberty Enlightening the World,” towering there at the threshold of America. It was a graceful act for the old-world republic of France to present this statue to the giant republic of America in the new world. I never tire of looking at it when it is within reach of my eyes. One can imagine the thrill of hope and exultation which must come to the heart of every poverty-stricken immigrant from Europe when first his eyes rest upon it, and he grasps its symbolic meaning.

I stood on the deck of a coasting steamer, coming up the harbor in the morning, after a stormy night at sea. The fog was all about us and the steamer picked her way carefully. Turning to one beside me I said: “We must be near the Statue of Liberty.” Even at that moment the fog rolled back, and there, looking out from the mists and gray obscurity, stood the majestic figure, towering high in air before us. It was really thrilling. At such a moment one could realize what it must mean to the immigrant coming from the hopeless toil

of years to support a useless court and monarchy. It must be like coming out of the mists of darkness into the clear sunlight of hope—even as the statue before us emerged from the mists that morning as the fog blew aside and the sun illuminated the face, a face which the artist has made strong and serene, noble and compassionate.

But it is of an experience in connection with this statue I would speak, an experience which is meant to illustrate our theme this morning.

While I was still a resident of New York, as curate of a great church, a former class-mate from the west came to visit me. As host it became my duty and pleasure to show him the city. Among other points of interest we visited Liberty statue. It was a crisp, cool morning in autumn, with a stiff northwest gale whipping the bay into white caps. We took the little steamer from the Battery to the small island on which the statue stands. We disembarked and entered the door at the base. We ascended the stairway inside, until we reached the head. Then from this great height of nearly three hundred feet we looked out the windows upon the harbor.

Those windows are the jewels in the crown of the statue; you can see them at times flashing in the sun from clear across the bay. They

are really good sized windows, through which we could see for miles in all directions. Thus we looked upon the city, the harbor with its busy life, the great Brooklyn bridge, the islands enclosing the harbor, the narrows, and the blue sea tossing beyond. Our guide asked us if we would like to ascend the torch, and we replied in the affirmative. He unlocked a small door leading from inside the shoulder to the hollow, up-lifted arm. An iron ladder was before us, leading upward in the arm. We could hear the wind shrieking and howling and the steel braces creaking. It seemed hazardous, but we were ashamed not to proceed. So we climbed up, and up, through the arm, through the wrist, to another small door. Our guide unlocked this and a narrow circular balcony was before us, with only a little iron railing around it. That balcony, two or three feet wide, is merely a flange of the great lamp which the statue holds.

The guide went out on this narrow balcony, evidently expecting us to follow. I confess I didn't want to, and wished very earnestly at that moment that I were elsewhere. But we went, ashamed to seem afraid. Permit me to assure you that until you are in a similar position you will never know how tightly one can hold on to an iron railing—and it looked very flimsy. Remember, we were nearly three hundred

feet in air; beneath us was nothing, for because of the angle of the uplifted arm, the torch is held outside the base of the statue. We were on a narrow balcony; a stiff gale was blowing, the gusts clutching at us as if to hurl us to the jagged rocks below.

Then my heart almost stopped beating, for I distinctly felt the platform on which we stood move and sway. I thought that the gale and our weight had proved too much for the strength of the arm. It swayed again, even more. I gasped, rather than said, to the guide:

"This platform is moving, it is rocking."

"Yes," he answered, with a serene smile.

"But," I said, "something is giving way; let us go down before it is too late."

"Keep cool," he replied, "it always does that in a wind; there is no danger."

"Maybe you think so," I replied; "but I think mother earth is a good enough place for us just now. *I'm going down.*"

And down we went—the arm creaking and swaying as we did so.

The guide told us later that the arm, and torch, and indeed the whole statue were purposely built to yield a little in the wind; that in a strong gale the torch would sway about six inches—though it seemed more like six feet to us up there three hundred feet in the air on

that narrow platform between heaven and earth. We asked him "Why?" and he replied:

"All high structures—towers, high chimneys, even the highest buildings, the so-called skyscrapers of the city—are purposely constructed so that they will yield slightly in a strong gale. "The statue," he said, "is built in the same way, and the reason is this: that if these high structures were built perfectly rigid they would break and crash to the earth in the first strong gale. But, built so that they yield a little, they do not break. They bend—you may actually say they bend; and because they bend they do not break."

This, my hearers, is the central thought in my discourse:

The great statue sways or bends in the storm, and because it bends it does not break. And—here is the kernel—our lives, too, must bend sometimes to the storm; bend that they do not break.

St. Peter says in our text: "Submit yourselves to the mighty hand of God." What does he mean? This: Bend in the great storm, the storm of sorrow and grief and bitterness. Bend, ye that are stricken and heavy laden; bend that you may not break.

The desire of the human heart for happiness is one of the deepest instincts of our nature.

We wish to be happy, and it is not wrong to desire it; though different men's conception of what will bring them happiness is as far apart as the east is from the west. But all of us set before us certain conditions which, when we have attained them, we think will bring us happiness. Then straight-way we proceed to try to make these at present unrealized conditions become facts, realities. That is what is often called the pursuit of happiness, a pursuit in which practically the whole human race is engaged. It is a fact also, as thousands have learned, that happiness is rarely, if ever, achieved by the mere pursuit of it, but is a by-product that comes to us while simply doing our duty. Either the things which we thought would make us happy pall, after we have attained them; or there comes into our lives some new factor which embitters.

Men for the most part seek happiness in wealth and that which wealth buys—luxury, travel, pleasures of the senses, the best seats at the opera, the best state-rooms on the steamers, the best (or at least costliest and perhaps most ostentatious) home in the city. Do these things make them happy? Rarely. And if at all, only for a time.

Perhaps health fails just when they had planned to enjoy their wealth. Or some great

sorrow falls upon them; perhaps there is an empty room and a vacant chair in the house, and a great and aching void in the heart and the life. Or, if not these, then some other condition arises which brings bitterness to the soul, emptiness and disappointment to the life where fullness and joy had been anticipated, planned for, labored for—and perhaps deserved—so far as we can see. When the great blow comes the heart is stunned at first. Then afterward come bitter tears, perhaps rebellion. Always there is a sense of life's incompleteness, and oftentimes an utter desolation of spirit, discouragement, and hopelessness.

What then shall we, as Christians, say of this? Why is it that human happiness never seems complete—seems nearly always either a hope or a memory? What interpretation does the Christian faith give to this life's incompleteness—the bitter that seems always with the sweet; the thorn that seems to be beneath every rose? What shall we say of it, how explain it?

First: Christian men and women should face all the conditions of life as calmly and bravely as they can. Let us look life squarely in the face, if I may so speak, ask what it is for, and why these things come to us. Remember we call ourselves Christians. We speak as Chris-

tians, are looking at human life as we think Christ interprets it, and facing its withheld completions in His spirit as bravely as we may.

Doing so, we affirm, first of all, that happiness is not the end of life, nor its chief purpose, nor its highest destiny. Indeed, if we interpret Christ aright He does not mean that we shall ever be long satisfied with *anything* in this world. The human soul has within it an infinite, deathless longing which God alone can fill. As St. Augustine said so many hundred years ago, "O God, my soul was made for Thee, and it can never rest until it rests in Thee." Those words I have often quoted, and always shall. They are supremely true, and all-important to earnest men and women.

My brethren, if I can read aright life's purpose, God has placed us in this world not chiefly for happiness, but for training. Life is a school. I repeat—would that I could grave it on every heart—*Life is a school*: and all its hard tasks are the lessons we must learn. Often the page before us is as mysterious and difficult as the new problems in mathematics set before the school-boy. But these problems of ours are the lessons God has given us to solve. Many a boy and girl in school has wept bitter tears over their first attempt to solve the binomial theorem in his algebra. I have seen some, in my

days of teaching, fallen asleep with their faces on tear-stained books before them where their unsolved problems were inscribed. And many a man or woman in later years, just like that boy at his algebra, has wept bitter tears over unsolved problems and hard life lessons, and perhaps night after night has fallen into restless sleep on tear-stained pillows because of them.

In after years the school-boy looks back and understands why it was best he must learn his lessons, and if possible learn them without help. In after years men and women, often, but not always, can look back on their hard life-problems and lessons, and understand them, and why they must learn them.

Thus, in the school of life, comes the discipline which God sees best for each of us. Why best? I cannot tell, though I can guess, and in a moment shall. Nor can any human being absolutely tell. That is beyond mortal ken; that must be left to God. Faith must carry us over that difficulty; there is no other way.

We have just said "often, but not always." We can *often*, but not *always* see in after years the reason of the hard task we had to learn. But why does God not explain *now* the meaning of your great loss, your sorrow, your infinite disappointment? Does God rejoice in this bitterness which has come to you? Or is there

no God—no power in the universe that cares?

Every rector has talked with those who have spoken such words from full hearts, breaking with sorrow. And all one can say is this: "God is good—must be, or all is vain and life is hopeless. God does *not* rejoice in your sorrow, but for some cause, unknown to you or me but known to Him, He does permit it. God asks you to trust it all to Him. Do your best, and trust it all to Him. There is no other way. Remember also life is a school. This problem of yours is one of its lessons; this sorrow perhaps your hardest lesson. But life also, remember, is greater than any sorrow, because life is infinite in value, and eternal—and, we Christians believe, is also divine.

Submit yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. Submit! Yield! Bend in the storm that you may not break. Ask for strength from day to day, and go forward step by step even in the darkness, looking up, even as sailors lost at sea look up and lay their course by the stars—even, if I may give a personal experience, as I, once lost at night on the great western plains near the Black Hills, looking up, guided my course by the North star and came safely home in the morning.

Remember too, no loss or bitterness has come to you that other human hearts have not

had to bear. There is fellowship in your suffering. That helps. Remember further that Christ, we must steadfastly believe, knows all your sorrow and looks upon it with infinite compassion. He who permits the lesson knows the solution of your problem and why you alone must learn it. You *must* trust it to Him—there is no other way than this way, which is the best way. It is written; "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy"; again, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face"; still again, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Cling to those promises; never let them go; they are meant for you right now; they are bread of life to you; they are your only hope and salvation. It is the only way. It is more, it is the best way.

There may be some help in this thought: The general sends only the most trusted soldier to the most difficult task. The enterprise which requires courage, tenacity, daring, heroism of the highest order, is entrusted only to those who are known to be not wanting in these high qualities. So, may we not believe that God in His providence permits great tasks, hard problems, deep sorrows, only to His chosen ones in whom He sees the noble qualities to endure and be brave? When such tests come to us, the Captain has entrusted to us the great and noble

task of showing to the world what Christian soldiers good and true may be—in the most perilous and trying marches, the hardest and most difficult tasks.

Surely there is some comfort in that. God has given us *great* tasks to perform, *great* burdens to bear, that we may show the world, for His sake, how nobly and splendidly a Christian can bear them.

To illustrate: The oak tree bends in the storm, bends and does not break. But as its great branches, reaching upward toward God, sway in the hurricane and thresh like living arms battling with the wind, at the same time down deep in the earth, beneath the sod, the roots take firmer hold, and their tendrils grasp with tighter clutch the earth which nurtures them. Thus with every storm the oak is more firmly rooted, stronger for the storms, nobler, more beautiful, more majestic—and just because it bent before the storm it did not break.

So with human life. When the storms come, when the bitter sorrow, the loss, the renunciation, the deep grief, so deep that like wounded animals we would hide it from all the world—when these come, then as St. Paul tells us in our text: "Submit yourselves under the mighty hand of God": Yield before the storm. Then deep in your lives, like the mighty oak which is

stronger for the storm, you will be rooted more firmly than ever on the Rock of Ages—rooted more firmly because of the storm you withstood. And at last upon your lips will be a song, welling up from the heart as you realize that in spite of all you had to bear, God is good; and somehow, sometime, somewhere, He will restore all you have lost.

This then is the sum of it, and it is a noble thought: Life is a school. Grave that truth on your inmost soul. Let me repeat: Life is a school. If your lessons are hard, your problems great, even by this you know that God is honoring you with great tasks. He who gave us life itself is abundantly able to give us back all that has been lost out of our lives. He does not rejoice in our sorrows. Infinite love looks down with infinite compassion on your tears, even as the earthly father upon the child he loves more than life itself. Beneath are the everlasting arms. Trust thou in God. Have faith in His wisdom. He gives no task that He does not with it give us the strength to meet. He says, "As thy day thy strength shall be." Like the broken fragments the disciples gathered up after the feeding of the multitude, God asks us to gather up the fragments—fragments of broken hopes, of shattered lives, of the withheld completions of this world. He has prom-

ised that, though sorrow may endure for the night, joy cometh in the morning.

This concluding thought. As we sailed up New York harbor that morning after the storm, the face of the statue of Liberty—the face of the woman—serene, strong, high, noble, compassionate, looked down upon us as the gray mists blew away and the sun shone through the clouds.

So, if our faith be true, we most steadfastly believe there is a day coming when the darkness and mists shall roll away, when from out the storms of life we reach the haven where we would be: then if God be good, and Christ be true, our own shall be restored to us—never to be parted from us more. Then from the mists of doubt, misunderstanding, and sorrow, a tender, compassionate face shall look down upon us—the face of the Christ—as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings shall arise forevermore, and the clouds shall roll away.

Some of our greatest scientists have said that all this mighty universe seems to be traveling to some “far-off divine event.” We Christians believe just that. We have faith to believe that that far-off divine event is the day of restoration of all things good and true, of all things which are worth restoring; the day when

love's sundered ties shall be knit up again, when broken hearts shall find healing, and all earth's tears be wiped away. We believe all that. We do not think it too good to be true. We think God is able—and will.

The faith of Christ teaches that. I bid you cling to it. It is *not* too good to be true. It is the promise of the Most High. Believe in it as an actual coming reality, all within the power of God, all to become actual if He is good, and solely because He is good.

But meanwhile remember, *Life is a school*. Lessons are sometimes hard. Bend before the storm. Submit yourselves under the mighty hand of God. In His own time ye shall reap if ye faint not.

FRAGMENTS

TEXT.—“*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*”—St. John VI, 12.

TRY to picture the scene.

It is evening by the sea of Galilee. The setting sun paints the western sky with hues of red, and crimson, and gold; its level rays transform the surface of the lake into a sea of fire, and throw lengthening shadows across valley and plain. Twilight is fast approaching; the flocks wend their way to the folds; the evening songs of the shepherds faintly echo among the hills.

Not far from the sea of Galilee a throng of people was gathered. Thousands were seated on the grass eating their evening meal. Moving among them, distributing the food, were the apostles; while in the midst, breaking the bread, was the Carpenter of Nazareth whose wonderful words and works had attracted this great multitude.

It was a peaceful scene, also a prophetic

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scene. He who was Himself the "bread of the world" was breaking physical bread to His followers. He who was soon to be crucified by men, some of whom no doubt were in this very assembly partaking of His bounty, stood calmly in the midst performing the miracle of feeding the multitude.

The hum of conversation arose on every side. The multitude, as they ate, discussed no doubt the great events that had been taking place before their eyes, many not knowing perhaps that the bread which they were eating was miraculous.

Many a controversy would arise as to this new Teacher. Some would maintain that He was only a prophet, others that He was the Messiah; while still others, doubtless, remarked with a sneer, "He the Messiah, indeed! this peasant! this carpenter! Whom we know! Whose brothers and parents we know! He the Saviour of Israel! No indeed, *this* man we know, but when the Messiah cometh, no man knoweth whence He is."

The meal was soon completed, and the Master said to His disciples the words of our text:

"Gather up the fragments . . . that nothing be lost."

We need not at this time discuss at length the miracle (or mighty work as some prefer

to call it). Like all miracles, or mighty works of Christ, it must be accepted or rejected on the simple evidence of the sacred record. We may make one comparison, however. You have heard, perhaps, the famous reply an Oxford student once made to one who was ridiculing miracles, and who said, "Do you believe that water was ever turned into wine?" To which the student replied, "If God by His laws can cause water to fall in rain, to be absorbed by the earth, taken up by the roots of the vine, ascend the trunk and branches, change into grape juice, and the juice converted into wine—if God by His laws can cause all this—then I believe God can shorten the process and turn water directly into wine."

Likewise, if God can cause the seed to germinate, cause it to grow, blossom, and ripen into wheat from which bread is made, then also God can shorten the process and create bread directly.

I believe He did this in the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. So much in passing, concerning the miracle; we need not discuss it further today, but turn our thoughts to the words spoken by our Master: "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost."

This is our text. But note the fact also that of the five loaves and two small fishes there

were gathered up in fragments twelve baskets full. To that we shall refer later.

Let us today, then, talk about fragments *in* our lives, fragments *of* our lives. In other words, the little things which we so often pass by and as often count as worthless, or of little value at most.

For in every life there are fragments, and he is the loser who esteems them of little worth and does not gather them up.

The first and most important lesson of these words of Christ is a very homely lesson and lies right on the surface in plain view; that lesson is simply the fundamental virtue of economy.

Let us not forget it. Christ practised economy. God wastes nothing. We should not waste.

Wastefulness is not only unworldlywise, but is, I believe, a positive sin. In the world of nature, men are finding as they penetrate more deeply that nothing is wasted, that the God of nature gathers up the fragments that nothing is lost.

Men have sometimes thought otherwise—that nature is wasteful. I have read such expressions in books as “the enormous waste of nature,” and the like. I never believed them, and do not now believe them; for it has always

seemed to me that a part of the fundamental conception of God is that He does nothing in vain.

And men are learning this. Time was when they thought that force (or energy) was wasted, until that great discovery called "the Conservation of Energy"; then men learned, and know now, that force is never lost. And this great fact of the Conservation of Energy stands beside that other great scientific fact, the "Indestructibility of Matter," as monuments to witness that the God of Nature wastes nothing.

So these words of Christ, "Gather up the fragments," are in strict keeping with the character of God as revealed in His Book of Nature. They indicate on the surface the rule of economy—that God does not waste, and we should not waste. It is wrong to waste. It is a sin to waste. It is, if one may so speak, throwing God's gifts back to Him, to waste anything whatsoever that He has given.

I well remember the remark of a child to me on this subject. Visiting with their parents, I went to the nursery to be with the children at their sensible supper of bread and milk and one ginger cookie each. The children, I noticed, carefully gathered up the crumbs and fragments that remained. "What are these for?" I

asked. "The birds"; they answered me in the most matter-of-fact way. "But why the birds?" I said; "why not throw them away?" Childish eyes opened wide at such heresy from grown-up people—and the answer came in tones of surprise and mild rebuke: "Because that would be wrong. Mother says never to throw anything away. God gave it to us, and if we don't need it, we must give it to God's birds, or the crickets, or something."

Splendid sermon that: Wise mother—fortunate children to have such a mother—to be trained from childhood to think of God as the Giver of all things, that His gifts must not be wasted, but that all the fragments must be gathered up. Heaven's blessing must rest upon such a home and its children. And may Heaven pity the children brought up, as so many are today, without such influences—in godless homes, where parents are ashamed, or too indifferent, or perhaps too lazy to teach these young lives unfolding in their presence the deep and beautiful lessons of God's care and love.

But this is only the surface lesson of these words of Christ about the fragments—the lesson of economy. Not stinginess, but *economy* in all things. No waste of God's gifts to us. Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost, whether of material or spiritual blessings. If

we do not need the gifts let us see to it that some of God's creatures who do need them are supplied.

But there are of course many deeper lessons in these words of Christ than this of economy, though that lesson is neither to be ignored nor despised. For there are other fragments in life which should not be ignored, nor wasted, nor forgotten. These fragments are the little things of life, the little daily blessings and joys and happinesses which constantly come to us, and which we take so often as a matter of course, or so frequently completely forget.

Most of us center our hopes and thoughts too much on the great things of life—great, as we esteem them. We long to accomplish some splendid purpose. We labor with anxious care to attain some much desired end; and then, we say, we shall be happy. When we are worth a million, or perhaps only a hundred thousand; when we have built that handsome house, finer than our neighbors'; when we can dress better and entertain more lavishly; when we have written that wonderful book or sermon, or painted that beautiful picture; when we have taken that high position in the world for which we are so sure we are eminently fitted—then, we promise ourselves, we shall be happy.

And in the midst of this struggle and intense

desire for some great end (worthy as it may be) we forget that life is passing—and ignore the fragments, the little things which after all make up most of the fabric of every life.

What are some of these?

The daily blessings, such as faithful friends, reasonable health, sweet sleep, loving companionship, a smile sent to illumine a day of gloom, the cheery word of good courage which some one has spoken to us—and we should pass on to help another.

Let me illustrate. One said to me not long ago, "I was discouraged—depressed—half sick—wholly out of sympathy with the world, my friends, myself, everything. I thought all the world was selfish, and I was selfish too, and wished I had never been born. Then a ring came at the door. A little girl was standing on the step with flowers. She handed them to me, and said simply, "They are flowers from the altar. The Church sent them to you. And," my friend continued, "I cannot tell you how it helped me. I felt ashamed of my selfish and unworthy thoughts. After all, I thought, there is an altar in the world, and people who believe, in spite of the materialistic sceptics and scientists who in their puny wisdom try to dismiss God from His universe. And these people who believe in God had remembered me in my sick-

ness, had taken the trouble to send me flowers from God's altar, flowers that had stood beside the cross, telling that God is a God of beauty, even as the cross tells that God is love and preaches the eternal lesson of sacrifice and unselfishness."

Now that one person made stronger and happier, whose day was made brighter by flowers from the altar, more than repaid for all the trouble of sending them for years. And yet the sending of altar-flowers to the sick and sorrowing is only a fragment, one of the little things the Churches have recently begun to do.

Think. No doubt every one of us here today has wasted some such fragment during the past week, some little kindness we received or might have done, some word of faith or good cheer, some little act of unselfishness which helped a fellow being over one of the hard places in life. There is a sick man or woman, give a fragment of your time to them. There is an unpopular man or woman in your office, give a kind word to them. You know not what there may be in their heredity or environment or physical condition to make them what they are. Go to one in sorrow and say a word of comfort; or simply go, even if you know not what to say, and your visit will be understood.

These are some of the fragments which we

who bear the name of Christian waste. We say we forget, but we ought not to forget. That forgetfulness is one form of selfishness, and selfishness is the root of all sin. We should *not* forget. We should teach ourselves the spirit of self-recollectedness, for that is the very spirit of Christ. Christians should remember. Christians *must remember*. Leave it to those who live only for self to forget; we have been taught a better way. Do not forget; but remember that these fragments which so many *do* forget, make up after all most of the fabric of daily life.

Again, my hearers, in the time of your Gethsemane, then, then above all, gather up the fragments. A great grief has come to you. Such grief comes not to you alone, for some sorrow is a part of every human life. It is one of the conditions of this world which all must meet, either courageously or complainingly. Perhaps there is the loss of some dear one who has gone before, with whom all your hopes lie buried; you long for the "touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still." Or some cherished ambition has been blighted, some aim upon which all your hopes have been centered. Or, hardest of all, you have lost faith in one you have loved and trusted. Base ingratitude has stabbed you. Where once was confi-

dence and sweet companionship and love there is now distrust and disappointment; you feel a sense of loss greater than death, oftentimes, when you realize that one in whom you have believed is not worthy of your trust, or one whom you had idealized, perhaps too much, is clay—and very common clay.

In all lives there come these times of bitter loss, of disappointment and sorrow, even as to Christ there came Gethsemane. There are times when it seems that all joy is forever gone, and life henceforth will be only a gray and cheerless path of duty, without inspiration and without hope.

Then remember: Christians, remember: never forget these words of Christ our Master, "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." Be of good courage. Be strong. Call on your Maker for strength. In a word, Be a true Christian. In your sorrow and bitter loss gather the broken threads of life together, and though it be with aching heart and tear-dimmed eyes, weave those broken threads once more into the web of your earthly existence.

Remember this always: Life is greater than any sorrow. If some dear one is not, for God has taken him, "Gather up the fragments" of happy memories—the memory of days past, the ready smile, the quick sympathy, the beauti-

ful days of sweet companionship. Cherish those memories. Thank God for them. Thank God that that departed life was in your life, if only for a time—for your life is thereby so much richer. Forget not also the hope, the confident, Christian hope, of meeting again that dear one in another fuller life in that better country where partings and sorrows, pain and separation, are no more. Gather all these fragments from the wreck. It is all worth while, and your life will be so much the richer for it.

Perhaps your ambition, your dreams of a life of large achievement or usefulness, have been shattered, and there seems before you only a daily round of plodding and drudgery, still, "Gather up the fragments," and make the most of what remains. Every life must have its share of plodding. Most lives cannot be great. But every life may have dignity, and worth, and usefulness, and thorough self-respect, and faith in God. So lose no time in useless repinings and complainings. Do not murmur nor rebel. Be brave. Be strong. Be faithful to your best. Gather up the fragments. Make the most of what remains. Surely this is wiser, better, finer, and more Christianlike than useless and ceaseless repining.

But hardest of all, worse, far worse, than death itself it is when one you deeply loved has

wounded the very springs of your affection and trust, has hurt you as only one near *can* hurt, has perhaps crushed and trampled under foot the friendship or love which, like a beautiful flower, you had thought would brighten and bless all your days.

What then?

Still I say, as Christ said, "Gather up the fragments." What else, what better can you do? Remember Him who was betrayed by friends and crucified by those He came to save, but who prayed on the cross for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." That is the very summit of unselfish love. Try to possess it.

Do not give up, never give up, your faith in *all* men because *some* men are false. Christ did not. Above all, never yield to cynicism, for cynicism is weak and shallow and belongs to the sophomore stage of human existence. Christ knew all man's weakness and sinfulness, and yet Christ still saw in him enough of worth so that He died for man.

Another, and the last thought. When the apostles gathered up the fragments of the loaves and two small fishes, there were left twelve basketsful—more than in the beginning. But remember this: Christ had blessed them.

So you and I, weak and stumbling though

we are, losing faith as we do all too often at the crosses and sorrows in life, may find, will find if we gather up the fragments, that there is a greater abundance of blessing in our lives than there was in the beginning; and when we do, then with enlarged vision of God's providence we will see that He doeth all things well.

Turn your thoughts once more for a moment to that scene by the lake, the seated company, the Master in the midst blessing the bread, the apostles breaking and distributing—over all the arching sky, the western glow on the clouds, the first faint stars here and there.

Remember that scene typifies Christ's whole life and teaching from that day to this. He feeds the world today with the bread of life. In the words of a converted Jew, "His words fill the world with heaven's music." He stands today showering blessings on you and me and all mankind. Let us ask ourselves: are we, my brethren, distributing those blessings to those about us as the apostles did the broken bread? What fragments are we gathering up into our own lives? What fragments are we bringing into other lives?

Remember too that marvelous law of the spiritual life, that the more we give the more we have to give. If I take one material dollar

from ten in my pocket and give it away there will be but nine left—though some of us believe that the nine will accomplish as much in the end as the ten would have accomplished, that God will fulfill His promise to those who tithe, or give a tenth.

Still let us admit the law in the material world that one from ten leaves nine. But in the spiritual life that is not so. One from ten leaves ten! yes, *ten* from *ten* leaves ten. In other words, the more we give in the spiritual life, the more (not less) we have to give. The more we give of faith, and hope, and love, and happiness to those about us, the stronger is our own hope, and love, and happiness, and faith.

This, then, is my message: "Gather up the fragments." That message will help us all on the way, particularly when the way is long and steep and rugged and hard—as it is sometimes to all. "Gather up the fragments." Aye, and forget not, "Give the fragments."

There are lives strong and full and true, but none so strong and full that they do not need the fragments. There are lives incomplete and sad and almost wrecked, but none so weak and sad they cannot gather *some* fragments—and give, also, some fragments of hope or good cheer to a life which is even more sad and hopeless. There is a little Alpine flower which

yields its fragrance only when crushed and broken. So many a life has never blessed another, or learned the lesson of unselfishness, until itself had known the discipline of crushed hopes and bitter sorrow.

So remember the fragments, those little things which after all make up so much of our earthly journey. Gather them up that nothing be lost. It is the word of Christ our Master and Teacher. It is the law of life written in the book of Nature, where nothing is wasted. Above all, it is the law of the Christian life for all mankind—living here upon this earth, God's footstool—questioning, learning, stumbling often, yet stronger for this very struggle and conflict and sorrow; sometimes losing faith for a time in God and man, but slowly learning our lesson as the years go by.

Learning as the years go by. Recall those words of Holy Writ, "here a little, there a little; line upon line, precept upon precept." Thus we learn from life's deep experiences. Above all, learning from the life and words of Christ, as well as in the school of experience, that nothing is wasted in this universe. Nothing is in vain. Nothing can be lost. As in the feeding of the multitude, so in the creation of the world, and in your life and mine, God has done nothing in vain. He gathers the fragments, and

will at the last gather up all of the fragments of these broken lives, that nothing be lost.

So may not we, looking ever to Him who is the Alpha and Omega of our lives, in sunshine and darkness, in sorrow and joy, gather up all the broken fragments in our lives, and give to others—as we may and can, that nothing be lost?

A MESSAGE FROM NEPTUNE

WE ARE told in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not covet."

Yet St. Paul, in Corinthians, says "Covet." But his words are: "Covet earnestly the best things."

One thing I covet in these days is to be called "*old fashioned*"—and to deserve the term.

For it is really a compliment, in my opinion, to be called "old fashioned" today.

As we look about us, catch the spirit of the times—of current literature, art, and the stage; observe the callow, shallow, modern youth who thinks it smart to carry a flask, and the noisy, painted, cigarette-smoking females who are his companions; as one notes the hectic pursuit of pleasure—not wholesome pleasure as deserved recreation after honest labor—but pleasure as apparently the chief aim of existence; at such a time it is certainly high praise to be called old-fashioned, especially by such as these just

described. One is almost forced, reluctantly, to believe that lecturer is right who said some time ago: "We Americans are a jazz and movie people. We love to be tickled and we hate to think."

Now that sounds pessimistic. Yet I am not a pessimist, but an optimist—chiefly because I believe the Apostles' Creed, with its affirmation that there is a living God.

Recently there have been violent attacks on our Christian Faith. A great botanist has proclaimed himself an infidel. To offset this one of the world's greatest scientists, Dr. Howard Kelly, of Johns Hopkins, says, "All I am or hope to be I lay at the feet of Christ. He is my Master and the world's only hope."

Or Papini, once atheist and blasphemer, today a Christian, and author of a *Life of Christ* which is translated into many languages and sold by hundreds of thousands.

Or Edersheim, converted Jew, who says of Christ: "He has filled the world with heaven's music." And this Jew, a scholar from a family of scholars, has also written a *Life of Christ* considered among the greatest by other scholars.

Or to those sufficiently interested I commend an article in the *American Magazine* for March, 1926. This article quotes Babson, the

leading American statistician, who gives the names of fifty great business men to whom he wrote inquiring, and who replied that they are children of religious parents, and profess themselves as having deep religious faith. Not all are Christians, for some are Jews. Among these names are Rockefeller, Morgan, Mackay, Gary, Armour, Lawson, Cortelyou, Henry Ford, Herbert Hoover—to name but a few of the fifty.

My discourse today is meant to reassure disturbed Christians, who may have felt shaken in their faith in the face of many present attacks upon it.

Such Christians are sometimes bewildered. At times they fear their faith is slipping, and contemplate the possible loss of it with a great horror. Like the apostles on a certain occasion when Christ said, "Will ye also go away?" so we sometimes feel like saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life."

So much by way of preface to a discourse intended to reassure unsettled Christians.

TEXT.—"*The heavens declare the glory of God.*"—Psalm XIX, 1.

Our message today is from a long way off—upwards of three billion miles.

This is no figure of speech but a fact. And I

said three *billion*, not three *million* of miles.

Our subject is "A Message from Neptune." The text, from the Nineteenth Psalm, "The Heavens declare the glory of God. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge."

This speech and knowledge is from a planet which never has been seen by the natural eye of man, but only by the aided power of the telescope. For Neptune, outmost planet of our solar system, is so distant that it is rated a star of the eighth magnitude and is invisible to the naked eye. It is sometimes called the giant planet; it is three thousand times as far from the sun as our earth, and it takes 157 years to traverse its tremendous orbit about the sun, while our earth traverses its lesser orbit in one year.

Would you know one of the romances of the science of astronomy? Listen, then, and marvel.

Neptune was discovered, its location marked, its orbit calculated, and was even weighed (or its mass determined) before a human eye ever saw it with or without the telescope.

How?

By what it did. Neptune accomplished certain visible results, though *it* was invisible.

Men had never seen it, but they had seen its

effects. They saw certain perturbations in the heavens they could not account for. The results were there but there seemed no sufficient cause. The human mind demands a cause for every effect. We may not always be able to find the cause, but if we see an effect we know the cause must exist whether we can find it or not.

Less than a century ago astronomers noted queer doings in the heavens. One of earth's neighbor planets, Uranus, seemed to be misbehaving, getting out of the right path, just as earth's children sometimes do. It caused much discussion in scientific circles. The planet Uranus wasn't acting right—that was certain. It missed appointments, which no properly acting planet ever should do. When it *should* be in a certain spot in the heavens, it simply wasn't there, but was found a little out of its pathway. Scientists were amazed. That was no way for a planet to do—but it did.

Astronomers thought at first they must have made a mistake in their calculations or observations. They repeated them and found the same results. Further, different observers in different parts of the world agreed in these results, and also as to the amount Uranus went out of the pathway. Finally they came to the conclusion that there must be some counter attraction, unseen as yet by human eyes; some

body off in the depths of space which Uranus drew near enough in its orbit at times to be attracted to, drawn aside by this unseen stranger in the heavenly host.

Then (mighty triumph of the human mind!) skilled astronomers made calculations from the factors they knew—the position of Uranus, its known orbit, mass, and the amount and direction of its perturbation: they figured just where this unseen planet should be at a certain time. Then they turned their telescopes to that seemingly blank spot in the heavens—and—*there it was!* This new planet they called Neptune. Here was the full explanation of the queer actions of Uranus.

And from this planet, three million miles away, I bring a message today. That message is: Every effect must have a sufficient cause whether we can find that cause or not. Results do not come from nothing. *

In recent years many Christians have been disturbed by the theory of evolution. At a certain time and place not long ago I happened to be in an assembly of men who were frankly discussing this subject. They were leading men in the community and spoke their minds freely. The majority believed the theory of evolution. Some thought it destroyed the authority of Holy Writ, others did not. But most of them

appeared to lean to materialism. I was impressed by the (almost) bitterness with which many spoke of the Christian doctrines and dogmas of the Church—particularly by one who seemed very certain indeed in all his opinions. He ridiculed what he called man's anthropomorphic ideas of God. For himself he professed great interest (which we all have) in recent discoveries of the composition of the atom. If I understood him, he said that so far as he could see, the center of the atom (called an electron) came as near being God as anything. He admitted this was pantheism and seemed to be rather proud of it. That meeting was not a good place in my judgment for a man uncertain in his faith.

And yet, was not that assembly a pretty fair representation of general opinion today? No doubt the large majority today believe in evolution. Many Christians believe it, and that evolution is merely God's *method* of working. They believe the creative days in Genesis are immense periods of time, which the Hebrew word translated "day" in our Bible may mean quite as well as a twenty-four hour day. In fact that same Hebrew word is used for a period of forty years in that same book of Genesis.

But perhaps the majority of believers in evolution are not Christians, but frankly ma-

terialists. They seem to think they have quite crowded God out of His creation. To them all is blind matter and force and there is no place in such a universe for spiritual values, spiritual powers, spiritual forces which are real and potent, and which produce results—even material results. And many, perhaps some before me, are shaken in their faith at such a time. It is to such and for such this discourse is written—to try to reassure troubled Christians. For them, for us, for me, for all who will hear I bring this message.

Coming across the illimitable distances of space I hear Neptune speaking and saying: "All effects must have causes. Uranus wobbled in her orbit because I, Neptune, was here and drew her out of her path. For years men did not understand, and blindly groped. Then came straight thinkers, who thought it out and discovered me—the planet Neptune. How? Why? Because results must have causes; sufficient causes to accomplish the results."

Now change the scene again and hear a personal experience; it was mentioned briefly in a previous volume but is here given more fully.

The writer was for many years rector in a city mis-ruled by crooked politicians, who were then the tools of the saloon. At one time there was one saloon for every 225 people, or 45

families—if you allow five to the family as social students usually do. Consider that probably half the families were abstainers; that would leave every 20 to 25 families to support a saloon.

Can you not imagine the devastating results? More than once drunken men had to be excluded from my Church services. More than once was I called to houses where men were suffering from delirium tremens. Mothers have come to me to go with them to get their drunken fifteen year old sons out of these dens of iniquity. One of the previously fine men of my parish, a splendid mechanic who drew excellent pay, fell into the toils. I was called to his house more than once to protect wife and children from the drunken maniac. Let me speak frankly, with brutal frankness some may think; but I found this man rolling on the kitchen floor in the filth and stench of his own vomit, with stove and furniture smashed about him. There he was like a beast, a graduate of the saloon, the perfect product of the accursed liquor traffic.

You can see I was in the midst of the battle. It taught me an undying hatred of the saloon and the liquor traffic—which I pray God may be smashed and wiped off the earth.

Well, among these victims was a burly

Scotchman. He too had been a skilled mechanic, drawing high pay; he had said he could drink or leave it alone—as they all say. But it got him, and ruined him. It took away his job, broke up his home, scattered his family (who dared not live with him), and left him a drunkard, begging for a nickel to get a drink.

He told me afterward that he was in the gutter, filthy, degraded, hopeless.

Shall I say hopeless?

Listen: one day a strange rumor came. This drunkard had gone into a saloon, but not to get a drink. Instead he was after a boy of fourteen whom the bartender was teaching to drink. He took this boy by the collar and dragged him out. Then he went back, leaned over the bar, and gave that bartender a smashing blow between the eyes that sent him staggering back among crashing glasses and bottles, and made him unconscious for half an hour. That was the rumor.

When I heard that, I thanked God and took courage.

That wasn't the end, but only the beginning. This former drunkard had actually quit drinking and was going straight. He did for years, and is yet. His family returned; his home was established again. His old job was offered him, but influential men of the city persuaded him

to open a mission and industrial home for the down-and-outers who had been wrecked by the saloon. It was said that one of the clergy promised him \$10.00 for every time he knocked a barkeeper down. He had a large sign painted and put in a prominent place:

"Who is the last man hired and the first man fired?

"The man who drinks."

One day I sent for him. He came to my study. I said, "Tell me how you conquered your taste for liquor. I want it straight."

He said—now notice, *he* was the man and should know, if anybody—he said solemnly: "God Almighty worked a miracle in my soul. I had tried everything, signed and broken the pledge more times than I can remember, had tried all sorts of medicine and cures. At last I was down in the gutter, yes, down in the sewer beneath the gutter. Drink had done its complete work. I wanted to die. Everything in life was gone. Then I called upon God in my extremity. I begged God to take away my life, or take away that appetite. I begged for death, or release from drink. And, I don't know how, but I declare before my Maker, like a flash the appetite was gone. I knew it. Like the woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment and was healed, so I *knew* that I would never drink

again. From that day I have never once touched it, nor wanted it, though I have gone often into saloons to take boys and girls out; and in the saloons you always get the smell. That used to floor me; it doesn't any more, thank God. Thank God, I'm free."

Neptune, three billion miles away, says to us that every effect must have a cause. Neptune is right. We all know it. Here is an effect—a material effect, for now he has good material clothes, and unsmashed furniture, and material food to eat.

But only a few years ago he was commonly called "a drunken bum."

Effects must have causes.

He should know if anybody. He says God did it in answer to prayer. Is he right? I believe he is. Who dare say he is not?

But if he is right, there are mighty powers in this world which are not material, but spiritual. Matter and physical force are not all, but there is that which is above material force, because it controls force and matter, as in the case of this man who says that Christ saved him.

But certain gentlemen today do not think so. They deny that Christ was more than a man—some say He never lived, but is a myth. They seem to think their *ipse dixit* sufficient. They

talk about scientists' devotion to *truth*—that they must go where truth leads them; and I notice it nearly always leads them to materialism, the vagueness and fog of pantheism, the worship of electrons, and the like.

Yet not all. Many scientists are devout Christians. I know many. For one, Professor James, sometime of Harvard, in his book *Varieties of Religious Experience*, cites case after case as convincing as that just given, and concludes that there is something above and beyond matter and force because it controls matter and force. And that something we Christians call Spirit. Moreover, we claim it is superior to matter and force just *because* it moulds and directs them.

Before closing, a word in defence of doctrine. You hear a good many today say they believe in religion but not in dogma or doctrine, and they don't want to hear it from the pulpit.

But in all fairness: How many dogmatic sermons did *you* ever hear? Did you ever hear *one*?

I very much doubt if half a dozen people before me ever heard dogma from the pulpit.

And yet—what is it?

Doctrine simply means teaching. Dogma is, according to Webster, a *settled* teaching. In religion it is the best thought of the most de-

vout and scholarly men, put in as condensed form as possible for the sake of better understanding. It affirms that certain things are settled in our religion.

I believe we need more of it from our pulpits; we need more teaching sermons, and less spineless milk-and-water discourses; fewer vague, foggy opinions, reviews of books and the like, and more proclamations, "Thus saith the Lord."

Furthermore, I am glad that in our Christian faith some things *are* settled—as, say, the great creeds of the Church. We do not take our religion from writers in the magazines and newspapers, nor even those boastfully truth-following scientists whose conclusions lead them so often to pantheism and the worship of electrons.

For one thing, they are ever changing. A few years ago scientists told us the atom was the ultimate division of matter; now they say it is the electron. Take medical science: A truthful woman once said to me, "Dr. A tells me I will die if I don't have an operation. Dr. B tells me I will die if I do." Now that was a matter of life and death. But the differences among Christians are not. Nine-tenths of the Christians in the world say and believe the Apostles' Creed, and disagree only on such

minor matters as the mode of Baptism, open or closed Communion, etc. Whereas if one medical scientist says you will die if you don't have an operation and another that you will die if you do, that means life or death.

Brethren, be not afraid of what St. Timothy designates the vain babblings of science, falsely so called. If they believe in evolution that is their privilege. It is a theory which seems plausible, but it is far from proven. If proven it would simply show that the Creator worked through ages of time rather than the less periods it has been commonly supposed. But whether you believe evolution or not, don't be swung into the fog of pantheism (which is really atheism), and, above all, don't worship an electron as your God. Don't be afraid to believe in things spiritual and divine. Don't apologize for so believing. Spiritual powers are invisible, intangible, imponderable—but mighty. No scientist can weigh things spiritual in his scales, see them with his microscope, or catch them in his test tubes. But spiritual power can pick a man right up out of the sewer, when all things material had failed as it did in the case already mentioned; and in that of that murderer and convict, Jerry McAulay, founder of the great New York McAulay Mission. Spiritual power put them on their feet, clothed

and in their right minds. Jerry McAulay led scores, hundreds, to the foot of the cross and to redeemed Christian lives. Professor James of Harvard, one of the great intellects in America, affirms this and cites scores of cases. Effects must have causes. So Neptune says from the depths of space. So I say from this Christian pulpit. And your minds and hearts must assent, I believe.

God is not yet read out of His universe even by complacently self-satisfied materialists with their ever-changing theories. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Man's opinions and philosophies steadily change. They have changed often in historic times, they do today. Don't anchor your eternal hopes on such unstable foundations. God is unchanging and unchangeable. With Him is no variableness nor shadow of turning. And His only begotten Son, the Christ, the world's gracious and merciful Redeemer, who has never been found in error in 2,000 years, says: "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but My word *shall not* pass away."

And the ages have proven Him right.

Every effect must have a cause. That message comes from a star—from Neptune. And from the infinite depths of the human soul comes the response. Instinctively we know it is true, it needs no demonstration. God is, and is

in His heaven. He gave His only begotten Son to redeem *you*, and me, and all mankind who will. That Son, the Christ and Very God, said:

“Come unto Me!”

“Why *will* ye die?”

Such words are heaven’s music—as said by the great converted Jew, Edersheim.

One last strain of that music:

“The pathway of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

* EXCURSUS

Permit a brief excursus as to another wonder of astronomy, simply a further demonstration of our text: “The heavens declare the glory of God.”

Our sun is 91,000,000 miles distant. Light, traveling 186,000 miles per second, requires about nine minutes to reach us from the sun. If the sun were blotted out this instant we would not be aware of it until nine minutes later. That is plain and simple.

Neptune is 3,000 times as far from the sun as is the earth. If it were blotted out, astronomers would not know it for twenty days afterward, even though their telescopes were fixed upon it. Yet Neptune is a planet of our own

solar system—one might say in our own doorway. Beyond it, the light from the nearest fixed star requires three and one half years to reach us. If it were blotted out we would not know it for three and one half years, but it would appear for that length of time still shining in the heavens. Stars are known which it takes 50,000 years for their light to reach this earth. We see them (through the telescope) not as they are now, but as they were 50,000 years ago. If they were blotted out they would appear as though still shining to earth-dwellers for 50,000 years. That is cold scientific fact.

Between these two extremes are countless myriads of stars at different distances, twenty light-years away—fifty—a hundred—ten thousand light-years distant. Do you wonder that Herschel, the great astronomer, had the words of our text engraved on his telescope: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork"?

Here is an interesting corollary suggested by astronomers. If we were on a star one hundred light-years distant, with telescopes powerful enough to see earthly happenings, we would see, not the events of today but of years ago—say the Civil war and its battles. And could we travel toward the earth with the speed of light from some far distant star, we would see this

world's history unrolled before us like a scroll: Caesar's wars, the crucifixion of Christ, the Crusades. It is a scientific fact that all history is written on waves of light traveling through space at this moment. It is an overwhelming thought. Surely he was right who called Astronomy the queen of sciences. And the palmist who penned the words of our text, "The heavens declare the glory of God," gave to mankind a mighty truth that modern astronomy is only beginning to understand.

TARES AND WHEAT

TEXT.—*"In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."*—St. Matt. XIII, 30.

SOME years ago the daily press reported that a number of piano manufacturers gathered a great quantity of old-fashioned square pianos in a certain town in New Jersey across from New York and burned them.

Why?

Because the square piano is no longer demanded by the trade. They cannot be sold—even second-hand. Therefore they are no longer made. They have given place to the upright and the grand. These old pianos were worthless. Therefore they were destroyed.

In New England manufacturing towns and cities, when some new invention has made the old machinery in the mills worthless, or at least of less value, and the product of the old machine cannot compete with that of the new ma-

chine—perhaps in quality, perhaps in price, or perhaps in both—what happens?

The old machines are broken up, scrapped. Parts having value as junk are sold; the other parts are burned or in some way disposed of.

Locomotive engineers take much pride in their engines, and often, partly in humor, talk disparagingly of the engine of some fellow engineer. In one case, in my hearing, one engineer told another that his locomotive was a scrap pile. He meant, of course, that it was only fit for the scrap pile, for old locomotives are broken up and the parts of any value as metal thrown on the scrap pile to be melted up and used again, or perhaps sold for old iron and brass.

In my boyhood days I recall seeing about the horizon frequently the fires and smoke where the farmers were burning their straw-stacks. The wheat had been threshed out; the straw at that time had not the commercial value that modern industry has given it in making paper and other articles. So the farmer, to get rid of his worthless straw, burned it.

One might give many other illustrations of the fact that things of no value in the material world are cast aside, destroyed, burned, disposed of in some manner, to get them out of the way. We all well know the truth of the fact.

These illustrations are merely to draw our attention anew to this truth, to hold it vividly before our minds, and draw a lesson from it. There are such lessons everywhere if we but have eyes to see them.

Consider now the parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

First, notice that Christ said the wheat should be gathered into barns and the tares burned; but He also said that until the harvest they should be allowed to grow together.

Before going further, let it be affirmed that this parable is not meant to teach the eternal burning of the wicked—though some have used it to support that view. The language is all, of course, highly figurative. If one could rightly infer that the wicked are to burn in material fire then quite as justly may one infer that the righteous are to inhabit barns; for the parable says that the wheat is to be gathered into barns and the tares burned.

That is absurd, of course. One almost needs to apologize for suggesting such a thought to intelligent people. But as this passage is sometimes quoted as teaching eternal fires of damnation, then we reply that if one member of the sentence is to be interpreted literally it is quite logical to be as literal with the other.

Both of these interpretations are equally ab-

surd. Christ here seems plainly to teach simply that the wicked shall perish and the just shall live. That which is worthless is destroyed. That which is of value is preserved. Moreover it is a principle we see exemplified everywhere in the world about us as shown by the several illustrations already given, from pianos and railway locomotives to straw-stacks. We know it to be true also in the world of nature, where the useless is cast aside and destroyed. We read also that Christ said of an unfruitful tree, "Why cumbereth it the ground?"

But is this principle true and just in human life, physical and spiritual?

And if so true, what lesson has it for us all?

In all physical life, the great principle which today is generally accepted by the world's eminent scientists is Evolution.

What is Evolution?

It is, simply, progress.

It is, in nature, the theory of development, that the unfit perish, the fit survive. The Evolutionist tells us that physical life on this planet began in primordial cells—from which we are all descended. Some think it better described in the word "ascended." One of the greatest books ever written, in my opinion, is Drummond's *Ascent of Man*, which maintains this view.

These first or primordial cells had that thing called life, which no scientist has ever been able to explain. These cells multiplied, as all life does. But as they multiplied some perished, and others survived. Which perished? The weaker, the unfit physically. That seems reasonable, and appeals to our common sense as likely to be truth. As a matter of fact that is exactly what happened, according to the world's greatest scholars.

Thus at life's very beginning the great principle of the survival of the fittest and the perishing of the unfit entered on the stage of the world of being.

From that principle, scientists tell us, all the world progress toward physical perfection has come. The first cells, which were fit, increased, multiplied, and grew stronger. As they grew stronger, new qualities developed, making them still more fit to survive. As these new qualities further developed, newer forms of physical life appeared. These in turn developed by the survival of the fittest into higher forms—and higher, and still higher forms. Then, coming down countless ages, animals increased in size and fitness to survive until finally came man, summit of physical creation—and, some of us think, also the Son of God.

At once comes the question :

How, then, about the story of Creation in Genesis?

Scientists who are Christians tell us it is allegorical, that the creation days mentioned in that first chapter of Genesis are time epochs of immense length, that God is still man's maker, but is thus shown to have made man, not, as one puts it, by the carpenter process—or as a carpenter makes a chair, or table—but by development, the *gradual* process of evolution. Evolution, they tell us, is simply God's method of working.

Scientists who are *not* Christians simply put aside the first chapter of Genesis as unbelievable. But many of the world's great scientists are Christians. They do believe in evolution and also believe in God and Christ and the Church. They believe also in the book of Genesis, giving it this allegorical meaning. Let no devout Christian feel alarmed, or fear that the doctrine of evolution will destroy Christianity. That fear, once great, is now passed forever. And let it here be said that the Hebrew word translated as "day" in the first chapter of Genesis is used in a later chapter as meaning a period of many years.

Thus we see in the material world, and the animal world, that it is a fact that the useless and unfit perish while the fit survive. Can we

go one step further? Is it true of man also—true not only of his body, but his soul?

Personally I believe it is true, and that it is one of the teachings of this parable, perhaps its chief lesson. By this parable of the wheat and the tares Christ would teach that all which is worth preserving in this universe shall be preserved; that which is not worth preserving shall be cast aside as useless. The parable is from the life of the husbandman or farmer. He destroys the tares that grew up with the wheat in his field. No one could rightly condemn him for destroying those tares. It was only common sense, foresight, prudence, economy.

Likewise in the case of that unfruitful tree in the other parable. None could condemn the owner of the vineyard for saying of that unfruitful tree, "Why cumbereth it the ground?" That, too, was just ordinary common sense, prudence, foresight, economy. Useless things are of no value. Useless things take up space that might be utilized for useful things. Useless people, *really* useless people, are cumberers of the earth. They take up space, and require sustenance which they do not deserve. Christ teaches as plainly as He can teach anything, that in this universe only those things which are of use (and therefore worth preserving) shall be preserved.

Conceive now of this whole world as God's vineyard. We must believe this if we believe in God. God Himself is the Owner and Husbandman. Into His vineyard God the Owner has placed as the chief object of His love, man. God gave to you and me and millions like us the great gift of life. Why? I believe, in the words of the good old Presbyterian catechism, "To glorify our Maker and enjoy Him forever."

God, our Creator, has the moral right to ask that we bear fruit, that we be not mere cumberers of the earth, that we be of some value in the world in which we live, that we be wheat and not tares. Surely God has the right to ask this of those whom He created; and just as surely God does ask this of us, as shown in this parable of the wheat and tares, in which the wheat is preserved and the tares are burned. God shows it in that other parable of the unfruitful tree which was to be cut down. Christ showed it in the fact that He cursed an unfruitful fig tree, which soon withered away—the only recorded occasion in which Christ cursed anything—and that, mark well, because it didn't do its part. God teaches in His great book of nature that same truth—in that the unfit perish, and the fit survive. And even man teaches this same universal truth in his daily practical life,

in that he destroys that which is of no use or service, whether old machinery, old pianos, the straw from which the wheat has been threshed —no matter what.

What then can you and I find as a lesson in Christ's parable of the tares and the wheat?

Simply this.

Usefulness in human life is its only excuse for existing.

God plainly teaches that. Our minds and hearts cannot deny that teaching is just. Let us ask ourselves then in sincerity and truth: "Is my life worth preserving? Am I worth, or worthy, of immortality? Am I an asset in the moral universe? Or am I a cipher so far as spiritual, and perhaps material, worth is concerned? Am I of real use in this world? Or am I possibly a tare, useless, or perhaps a positive injury to this world in my material, moral, and spiritual life?"

How many of us have the moral courage to face that question? How many of us can see ourselves impartially enough to answer it fairly? How many have the perseverance to continue that inquiry until we arrive at a definite answer?

Some today believe in a hell of everlasting fire, as men once very generally believed. I cannot, but I *do* believe in a punishment which is

eternal—eternal loss. And increasing numbers of this world's best thinkers today believe in the eternal death of the unfit. It is sometimes called the doctrine of annihilation, the perishing forever of those whose lives are not of moral worth enough that they deserve preserving. Christ certainly spoke of a second death. He would not have so spoken had it not been true. God is the Judge, not you and I. But it does seem to me, so far as human vision can discern, that there are lives in this world which morally are simply not worth perpetuating, not fit for immortality, but fit only for the rubbish heap of the universe, if one may so speak. Such lives, I believe (I do not know, but I believe), after full and repeated opportunity for amendment, will be blotted out. Really, such lives *will blot out themselves*, just as we know men often destroy their physical bodies by persistent sin, dissipation, violation of the laws of Nature and Nature's God.

Such, brethren, seems to be the plain teaching of this parable where the wheat is preserved and the tares destroyed. You may not agree: and you are free not to agree and still remain a Christian and a Churchman. For the Apostles' Creed, the sufficient statement of our Church's faith, is silent on this question of punishment—as being too obscure to be placed in

so brief a statement of the faith as the Creed.

Yet it would seem reasonable, just, and even merciful that awful wickedness in time destroys itself; that those who persist in defying the mercies of God who says, "Why will ye die? Come unto Me, whosoever will, and receive the water of life without money or price"; that these should cease to be.

Why should tares be preserved? They are useless. Why should a life which has proven itself morally worthless or evil be preserved? Why should a life which has shown itself utterly selfish be preserved? What has such an one ever done to deserve to inherit immortality? Some say there are no such lives. But that is to assert Christ's teaching futile and foolish, to affirm He was fighting phantoms in His warnings, that His words about a second death have no meaning. A life which is self-centered, morally useless, or persistently vicious and evil, has no excuse for being perpetuated. It is a blot on God's universe. It does not deserve immortality. There is no reason why, after it has had full offer of God's mercy, and spurned even the death of Christ on the cross—there is no reason why such a life should be perpetuated. It is unfit.

Wherefore, let us who care, and believe Christ came to teach men truth, let us ask ourselves this question:

Is my life worth enough that it should be perpetuated? Am I really worthy of immortality? If it is true in the spiritual world (as in the physical) that the unfit perish, am I among the unfit? In the sight of God, Searcher of hearts, as He looks down into my soul, does He see there sufficient of worth, of beauty, of truth, of goodness, that my soul is worthy of immortality?

Not, remember, that God measures us by our failures and successes as the world measures. His mercy is infinite. He measures us by honest intentions. He alone can do this, because He alone knows our intentions—how deep or shallow, how high or low, how pure or impure, how persevering or inconstant. God sees not as man sees, and judges not as man judges, but judges by the thoughts and purposes of the heart.

We alone, besides God, know something of the secret thoughts and purposes and intentions of our own hearts. We can apprehend in a measure, if we have courage to examine ourselves as we should. We can apprehend something of what God sees in our inmost souls.

Let us face this question: we must sometime, why not now? Does God see in us that which is worth preserving, that which is worthy of immortality?

And if He does not, or if we fear He does

not, shall we not seek so to shape and amend our lives that He may see something that *is* worthy of preserving, more fit to survive, more fit for immortality?

That, I take it, is the message of this parable. But there is another great lesson here. We read that Christ said to let the tares and wheat grow together until the harvest. Why? Lest in rooting out the tares we destroy the wheat also.

God is good.

God is Love.

God desires not the death of any child He has created.

God would that we turn to Him still.

God is waiting, bearing with man's sins that man may turn to Him. That is why He so long endures our trespasses. He is waiting that we who worthily deserve to be punished may seek His reconciled face—may become fit to survive, worthy of immortality. Thus God's mercy waits on sinful man, even the most desperately wicked. God actually pleads with man to come to Him and have life. St. Peter speaks of the longsuffering of God waiting upon the disobedient, which longsuffering, St. Peter continues, is our salvation.

Would you know the depth of God's love and pleading?

Turn then from God's severity, which evil

men compel, to His infinite, eternal love for His children.

Look upon the cross. Behold it there on Calvary's hill.

That cross is the measure of God's love to man. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend. Christ called us friends, if we seek to do His will. God in Christ gives life *for* men, that He may give immortal life *to* men. God wants man to live, not die. He wants you and me to live eternally. And that we may so live He wants us to be worthy of immortality. That is the lesson of the parable of the wheat and the tares.

It was God's infinite love that planted the cross between man and eternal death. God's love still pleads there. With out-stretched arms upon that cross, Christ says, "Why will ye die? Come to Me and have life—even life everlasting."

And who may come?

"Whosoever will, may come."

Ring down the ages and across the centuries like sweetest music, like vesper bells in the twilight telling the shipwrecked mariner that land and safety are near, come those sacred, blessed, joyous words of hope, to you and me and all mankind:

"Whosoever will, let him partake the water

of life freely." It is the gift of God to His children, the gift of immortality.

For God is Love; incarnate, longsuffering, infinite, eternal love.

And that love is our redemption, our salvation, our sufficient hope for immortality.

Wherefore come; accept God's proffered mercy, and inherit immortality.

WHAT IS LIFE?

MY son and I were on an outing—bicycling—in southern California.

We visited an historic spot, an old stone mill, erected by Spanish monks centuries ago. It is at the end of a deep ravine overlooking the San Gabriel valley. About it, and extending far up the ravine, are groves of live oaks and stately eucalyptus trees.

Near the old stone structure, but not visible from it, is one of the greatest hotels in the world. About it here and there are excavations where searching parties have looked for buried treasure—which tradition says the old monks buried. Outside the mill is a reservoir to catch the winter rains flooding down the ravine. All is substantial stone and timber construction. It is a romantic spot.

As we approached we saw a number of people in modern outing costume about the open door, and heard voices from the interior. Inquiry revealed the fact that it was used for

a club house for people from the great hotel.

We entered—a large vaulted and timbered room. On one side was a great stone fireplace showing evidence of centuries of use; here and there were carved on the walls and timbers, symbols of the Christian faith. Evidently it had been the living and assembly rooms of the old monks.

But—its present occupants!

On one side a bar, with bottles and glasses; on another an upright piano; at various tables were seated men and women—evidently from the hotel.

All were expensively dressed.

They were not a wholesome lot. The men looked dissipated, heavy-eyed. The young women were hard-faced and bold in appearance. A number of both sexes had cigarettes hanging from their lips. One young woman was blowing clouds of smoke through her nose—which perhaps she imagined a refined and lady-like accomplishment. The piano tinkled some horrible syncopated discords; a few were going through strange contortions meant for dancing, I suppose. The air was full of the fumes of tobacco-smoke and liquor.

Such were the setting, the scene, and the actors. Here was the old mill, built by mission-friars who had given up all and hazarded their

lives long ago to teach the Christian faith to savages; its vaulted rafters had no doubt often resounded to the minors of their Gregorian chants. Today it was a bar-room, occupied by useless creatures whose chief distinction was that their parents had money.

If one could fancy the spirits of the old monks lingering about their earthly habitations, how they must have grieved—if spirits grieve—to see the place so desecrated by such degenerate occupants, the crowd known, I am informed, as “the cock-tail crowd” of a great resort hotel.

One of the young men gave the final touch when he held up a glass of liquor and announced to the world, “This is the life—the life for me.”

There were not only the scene and the actors, but even the words that suggested this discourse; almost the text.

Life?

That was not life, but death. Death to all that is fine, and noble, and high, and splendid in human existence.

Life?

A voice seemed to come down the ages saying other words about life, and these were the words: “This is life, even life eternal, to know Thee, the true God, and the Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

Thus was this discourse conceived, suggested by the coarse cry of a shallow, half-drunken youth, who held aloft his half emptied glass and shouted, "This is the life for me."

So let us take these words of the Christ for our

TEXT.—"*This is life eternal, to know Thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*"
—St. John XVII, 3.

Life!

What is Life?

What is it to live? What ought it to be? What might, what may it be? What does life mean—to you and me?

Is it merely to function—to breathe, to eat food, and digest it? Is it to work and play, to sleep and wake, to smile and weep, to love and hate?

Ingersoll said, "Life is a bleak and barren waste between the cold and chilling peaks of two eternities." Thus spoke a notorious agnostic, though a great orator and rhetorician.

He was a man famous (or infamous) for his scurrilous attacks on the Christian faith. He was a master of oratory, and he used his gifts to seek to destroy the hope of thousands, which he undoubtedly did. Thus he described life. But after the death of his brother, speaking beside the bier, he added something significant. He

said, "Life is a bleak and barren waste between the cold and chilling peaks of two eternities. But," he added, "beyond the farther peak, Hope sees a star and hears the beating of a wing."

So even this man, who had destroyed the faith of multitudes, when he stood in the solemn presence of death, injected a note of aspiration, of hope into his words, and expressed it in symbols of the Christian faith.

The question of what Life is, in its deeper aspect, comes to all of us; and not seldom, if we are thoughtful. To the shallow and superficial it is an unwelcome thought and is quickly banished, buried underneath the world's voices of frivolity and trivial pleasures or even vicious indulgences. To the sorrowing, standing perhaps beside the grave of some one well beloved, or listening across the gulf of years for a voice now still, the question "What is Life?" comes with poignant insistence. And even to what is called the practical man, the man of affairs, immersed in the cares and labors of existence, there are times when a still small Voice from, he knows not where, whispers in the chambers of the soul: "What is your life? What is it for? To what consummation does it point? Why this ceaseless struggle for worldly prizes—for wealth, position, fame, power—when all must

soon be laid aside and the places which once knew you shall know you no more?"

Who of us has not heard this still small voice within? Who has not sometimes paused in the daily plodding, or the whirl of busy affairs, and asked himself, "What is it all for? What does it all mean? Why am I here? What am I living for? And above all, whither am I going?"

So let us today consider this question. Let us honestly endeavor to see what life means to most men, and then examine its interpretation as given by One who spoke with authority.

What is life—to the scientist?

The greatest among them admit that they do not know; many answer the question in terms of the crudest materialism. Some scientists say, "Life is simply an aggregation of matter, assembled by laws of nature, infused with energy, organized into action by natural laws, but springing always from a previous form of life."

Scientists can analyze the constituent elements of our physical being; they can tell us that the human body contains—so much water, so much lime, so much phosphorous and the rest. But here they pause; they cannot tell us more. The answer is as unknown to them as it is to the new born babe.

Then there is the Epicurean; to him life is

simply a means of pleasure—to body or mind, or both. He believes that life is for what one can get out of it, here, now, today. He lives to thrill his nerves. He says "Eat, drink, and be merry; enjoy, enjoy to the utmost; and that you may enjoy longer and not dull the edge of pleasure, it were wise to conserve your powers of enjoyment. But get all the pleasure you can from living, for nobody knows whether there is life beyond or not. Therefore he is a fool who gives up the certainty of present pleasure for the possibility of some future uncertain good."

That is a philosophy (if it may be called such) held by thousands today. Whatever else may be said, it is certainly not a very elevating conception of existence, nor one calculated to satisfy the deathless longing of the soul.

Then there is the society woman—or man—if we may call such a man. What means life to such as these? It means knowing the right people. It means being mentioned as among the "exclusive set," which they so dearly love; it means seeing their names in the social register, or in the daily print under the magical heading (to them) "Society Events." These desire above all things to be "correct," to be, as I have heard some of the more trivial say, "smart," and to know what they designate as "smart people." The proper attire for morning, after-

noon, and evening engages much of their attention. They aspire to be known as "men (or women) of the world." The latest fashionable phrases and even words are a part of their vocabulary. They even possess a patois of which they deliver themselves in high-pitched, often execrable voices. For such things they live—these people. This is life to them. And their importance in this world of earnest, serious-minded men and women is absolutely—zero; they are the ciphers of human existence whom a good and wise God permits to live for reasons not yet apparent.

Or consider the business man, the real man of affairs, immersed and often submerged in the practical things of this world. Oftentimes he is more than a mere business man, sometimes much more, a splendid, upright citizen and a Christian gentleman—using that term in its highest sense. Again he may be the sort of business man who, for reasons of expediency, supports the moral forces of the community, and keeps Sunday (and everything else he gets his hands on, as I have heard said).

What is life to him?

It is, too often, business only—or chiefly. It is trade, markets, profits, accounts—all severely practical. Oftentimes this business man will tell you that business and religion will not mix. But

there are business men, and the best among them, who will say, have said to me, "Business and religion *will mix*. The only good and permanent rule of business is the Golden Rule of Christ. And the religion that will not mix with business is no true religion." Some of the greatest businesses of this country are now conducted on Christian principles and have been increasingly prosperous.

Then let us ask: What is life to the toiler, the man who works with his hands, the man to whom the daily struggle for subsistence for himself and family is a constant battle?

Ask such a man, "What is life?" and he replies bitterly, as one did to me a few years ago: "Life is grinding toil and drudgery—work, hard work, nothing but work, that one may live at all."

Small wonder that he often grows envious. He sees about him those who, through no merit of their own, but often by inheritance or unfair influence, are higher placed, better paid, or released from the burden and pain of hard, daily toil which he must endure. He sees their children clad in soft raiment while his own wear coarse and often scanty garments. He sees those children of the affluent, frequently no more attractive by nature nor more brilliant mentally than his own offspring, yet pushed

ahead by powerful influences to the easier, cleaner, better recompensed, and more pleasant walks of life. He loves his own as much as these others, it often seems to me far more than those whose lives are so filled with many things, often trivial things. So, as he leads his little boy, coarsely clad, along the street, and sees dash by him some glittering equipage with expensively clothed children, bound for the country or mountains or seashore which *his* little boy or girl would enjoy but cannot have, no wonder that envy gnaws at his heart, and bitterness fills his life at this world's injustices; no wonder the red flames of social revolution blaze up, as they do in all the world today. Ask him "What is life?" and in bitterness of soul he answers, "Life is toil, incessant and unremitting toil for me and mine. There is no hope nor justice in this world. Life is drudgery."

Thus, brethren, I have tried to show what life is, and what it means to the men and women we see about us daily in this world. I have endeavored to speak the language of reality, not to exaggerate. I have sought to speak the truth in love, not hate. I have talked with all these men and women here described, have mingled with them, and know their thoughts. Of course no hard and fast line can be drawn between

the various classes mentioned. They overlap and shade one into another. And there are many exceptions. There are not a few of great worldly wealth and influence and position who are as simple and true and earnest as the humblest laborer. And there are those with toil-worn hands and plodding lives, who are kings in heart and soul. As the patriarch said: "I have seen beggars on horseback, and princes afoot"—which means, of course, beggarly souls in broadcloth and silk, and princely souls in calico and denim.

Yet the rule, and not the exception, is what we must consider. These just described form a majority of men and women; and their interpretation of life is that which I have given, for the most part.

But there is another voice that speaks of life. It comes to us across the gulf of centuries. It spoke first in Judea, from the little town of Bethlehem which heard its earliest infant cry. That voice speaks with authority; it speaks as never mere man spake. Ask it, ask Him, "What is life?" And like heaven's music comes reply:

"This is life eternal: that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

Two things, which are yet the same thing:

1st—To know Thee, the true God.

2nd—And Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.

What is it to know God? What is it but to believe *He is*, exists; then to believe that He is our Father, cares for us, loves us even as an earthly father loves his own children, and that He would for us all that is highest and noblest and best? What is that? Simply this: "He hath showed thee, O man, for what doth God require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

To do justly.

Justice first; notice the eternal law of righteousness; but tempered with mercy, even as *He* is merciful; and then to walk humbly with thy God.

And second. To know Christ, whom Thou hast sent.

What is it to know Him?

It is to believe that God *did* send Him, and therefore did, and does, so love this world that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem the world, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. To believe this and seek His works to do, is to know the Christ, who is One with God—to know the Christ who taught us to say: "Our Father"—two words which, understood and acted upon,

will solve the world's every social and other problem because they teach the fatherhood of God, and therefore the brotherhood of man.

That is life—to know God, to know Him as our Father, and the Christ whom He hath sent as Elder Brother.

So the Christian philosophy is not "Life a barren waste between the cold and chilling peaks of two eternities": not so, even though the great orator permits us a ray of cheer, and adds that "beyond the farther peak, Hope sees a star and hears the beating of a wing." That is not enough—not near enough. It is vague, uncertain, inadequate. Such flowery words will never feed the human soul with the bread of life, but are merely the beautifully expressed dictum of a confessedly great orator, one of splendid gifts, but which were prostituted for worldly praise and profit.

That is not enough. It does not answer the deepest longing of the heart, nor satisfy the ultimate cry of the human soul. Only God can satisfy that hunger.

To know God means in all our dealings justice, mercy, and true humanity. It means walking humbly with Him. To know the Christ means to find in Him our daily guide, our solace in sorrow, our help in time of conflict, to walk with Him as our elder Brother who takes us

by the hand in life's perplexities and says in accents sweet and compelling, "This is the way, My child, walk in it"; or when the conflict is bitter and hard, "Rest awhile, for the journey is too great for thee."

And it means still more. It means that at the eventide, when the shadows lengthen across the little landscape of our lives, then, not a mere *hope* which sees a star beyond, but a *faith*, a confident, sustaining, triumphant faith, which is a very anchor of the soul, as St. Paul said. It means that just beyond that "farther peak" is a new and larger life where they who have come up—*up*, out of great tribulation, shall dwell forevermore.

This is life according to the greatest Interpreter of life this earth has ever known.

Amidst all the discordant and contradictory voices of this world, amidst life's conflicts, sorrows, woes, and also its joys and deep fulfillments, may the music of that voice ever fill our souls. It is the harmony of heaven. It came to earth amidst the chanting of angelic choirs on the first Christmas morn, singing, "Peace on earth, Good will to men." It is the one complete, satisfying, profound, yet simple interpretation of our existence here, that, "This is life, even life eternal, to know Thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

In the state where I now live a greater portion of the year, we are not far from the mountains. One half our horizon is made up of those silent sentinels of God—the eternal hills, to which David sang he would lift up his eyes for help.

One may find many beautiful lessons in the mountains, suggestions of many ennobling thoughts.

There is a certain peak, Old Baldy, nearly twice as high as others of the range, and always snow-clad. In motoring over the country, if one sometimes is uncertain as to location and direction, one need but look about for this towering peak, and by its position can usually determine his own.

Also you may note a curious fact, curious at first but a moment's thought explains it. When going *away* from the range, as one looks back at the mountains their appearance rapidly changes, peaks that at near view appeared high seem to fade away into foothills; others not so apparent at near view, or perhaps entirely invisible close to the range, begin to loom higher and yet higher the farther you go, until you see that they are the highest peaks, and dominate the range.

So (is it not true?) in life. Things, events, and people who once appeared important to us

diminish in size when circumstances have parted us and time passes—while others, once scarcely noticed, both other people and other events, grow not less but greater as they recede and we see them in the perspective of the years, the truer perspective time alone can give.

Thus, it appears to me, with the thing we call religion, and that one and only Christ, the founder of our faith. Perhaps in our careless and foolish and shallow earlier years these seemed of little import in our lives; but as the journey lengthens, as we look back over the path we have come, these deeper things of the soul loom ever larger and larger. Like the mountain peaks on the horizon of life, we perceive, not only that they are important, but that they are the only things which *are* important. Among them this is the supremely important thing, said by the Christ Himself:

“This is life, even life eternal, to know Thee, the true God.”

Not the fleeting enjoyments wealth can purchase, not the hectic pursuit of pleasure, nor all the material gifts which this world can bestow—comfort, ease, luxury, travel, education, music, art—not all of these, nor any of them, can satisfy the deathless hunger of the soul for life, in its deepest, widest, fullest reality.

But one thing in all this universe is sufficient for that, the one thing the Master life proclaimed, to know God. This, this alone is life, in all its heights and depths and breadth—to know Thee, the true God, and the Christ, whom Thou has sent.

LIFE A SACRED TRUST

WE ALL seek interest in life. That is why people attend the theater. Life is so prosaic to many that they often try to escape its commonplaceness by watching the mimic tragedies or comedies of the stage. We lose ourselves, and thrill at acted woes which are false and often mawkishly sentimental.

I have no criticism for a good play—if it is decent and holds the mirror up to life. But one wonders sometimes at the mentality of the throngs which attend the movies, with their usually cheap sentiment, utter shallowness, and frequent vileness. Most of them are not real drama, but as one said in my hearing, “bunk” and “piffle.” You wonder, also, what kind of brains the people had who wrote them.

But would you hear real romance, real drama, in real life? Here it is:

About fifty years ago the English Church Missionary Society undertook the conversion of one of the most cruel tribes of African sav-

ages and cannibals. They sent a bishop and other missionaries to Uganda. The African tribal chief killed the bishop: the missionaries suffered many things—some giving up their lives. But they did not kill Christianity—for it cannot be killed; and others came to fill the places of the murdered missionaries.

That was fifty years ago. Today that savage tribe is Christian, has many Churches, and is helping to carry the gospel to other pagans. Now if you want real romance mark this: A son of the chief who murdered that bishop is now a priest of the Church. He and the son of the bishop killed by his father are friends and work together in the same field. *There is romance*, romance which is fact, not fiction.

Here is another story, true—I know the people.

On the wall before me as I write is a picture of a large wooden cross made of the trunks of trees. It stands perhaps twenty feet high; the background is a mountain landscape in the Philippines. It marks the grave of a saint, Deaconess Hargreaves, of the Sagada Mission.

I knew her well. We were co-workers in a great New York City parish, where everybody loved her. She always seemed to me an almost faultless type of Christian, as nearly perfect as may be found in imperfect human nature.

Years after our New York friendship, when I was rector of a New England church, she went to the Philippines. Later she came to this country on furlough. She came to my parish and, in costume, spoke to my people and my Sunday school. She sat at my table and told me of her life and work, to which she was entirely devoted. She told how she, an unprotected woman, went alone into the wilderness to look for God's pagan children; how she began with the little children, her first approach a smile and some little gift; how she gathered them until she had a school; and then, through the children, won the parents. She said she hoped to die there in service, and be buried among her people.

Her wish was fulfilled. The picture of her cross-surmounted grave is, as already said, above the desk whereon these words are written.

Now here again is romance, here is drama of high courage, real heroism of the noblest kind. How it thrills us! How the tawdry drama of the screen, with its professional heroics, pales into pitiful insignificance in the presence of such magnificent heroism, such utter giving of all, even life itself, for others.

These things seem a fitting preface to this discourse on the theme, "Life a Sacred Trust."

TEXT.—"*When his life, which was lent him, shall be demanded.*"—Wis. XV, 8.

Most men, if you ask them about it, would tell you they considered their lives their own, to do with just what they pleased. But there are some men and women who do not look upon it thus, who look upon their lives as lent them by Almighty God, to be used in God's service, in which, they believe, they will find their own best happiness.

Such, very evidently, was the belief of the sacred writer from whom our text is taken. That text is from the portion of the Bible called "The Apocrypha." These writings are not in the ordinary Protestant Bibles, but were omitted at the Reformation. They come at the end of the Old Testament, and are not esteemed by the Anglican Church as being on a par with the rest of the Bible. They are not, indeed, a part of what is called the canon of scripture, yet they are bound in with the Bibles we use in the churches, and it is recommended that Christians read them as "profitable for instruction in morals and manners."

The perusal of these books is extremely interesting, especially when read consecutively as one reads any other book. None is more interesting than this book called the Wisdom of Solomon, from which our text is taken, and

from which permit me to quote at some little length.

What a wise man Solomon was! How keen an observer of human life! How really bright and clever in his way of expressing things! How wonderfully terse his style! How much he could say in a few words! Let me quote again from this passage wherein our text is written, for the words are well worth repeating. Solomon says:

"Thou, O God, art gracious and true, long-suffering, and in mercy ordaining all things.

"For to know Thee is perfect righteousness: yea, to know Thy power is the root of immortality."

Solomon lived in an age when idolatry was common. If you are interested in "atmosphere" you will find it in these scathing words he wrote about it. Evidently the battle was on.

"For neither did the mischievous invention of men deceive us, nor an image spotted with divers colors, the painters' fruitless labor.

"The sight whereof enticeth fools, and so they worship the form of a dead image that hath no breath.

"They that make them, and they that desire them, are lovers of evil things, and are *worthy* to have such things to trust upon."

Can you imagine anything more cutting than that? They that make and worship painted images are *worthy* to have such things to trust upon.

He continues: "For the potter, out of soft earth, maketh every vessel with much labor for our service. Of the same clay he maketh both the vessels that serve for clean uses, and likewise also such as serve to the contrary; but what shall be the use of either sort the potter himself is the judge. And employing his labor foolishly, he maketh a vain god of the same clay, even he which a little while before was earth himself, and within a little while hence returneth to the same out of which he was taken, when his life, which was lent him, shall be demanded."

That is great writing. To compare the thought and expression of those virile, burning words with the pigmy philosophers today—the men who write the so-called religious novel, or magazine article on religious philosophy—is like comparing the majestic diapason of a great, deep-toned organ with the squeaking notes of a hand-organ played at your door. Solomon is great, while these moderns are merely silly, shallow, and dreary.

Bear with just a few words more of Solomon. He continues speaking of this foolish man,

made of dust, soon to return to it, and worshipping a God that himself has made of dust. He says:

"Notwithstanding, his care is, not that he shall have much labor, or that his life is short and fleeting: he thinks not of these things. His heart is ashes, his hope more vile than clay, his life of less value than dust: for he knows not his Maker that breathed into him an active soul. But he counted life for a pastime, and our time here a market for gain."

Solomon wrote thousands and thousands of years ago, but his words are alive today; keen, tempered words they are, and cut to the heart of life like a Damascus blade.

My hearers, is it not true? Is it not a fact that one-half, perhaps three-fourths of the people we meet count their life a pastime, and their time here a market for gain? Men do just these things today: they drink iniquity like water, and they say they must be always getting, even in many cases by evil means. And then the day comes, as it will come to all of us, *when our lives, which were lent to us*, shall be demanded. Then what?

Have you ever stopped to consider much, my hearers, this wonderful thing we call life? Here am I, a man, speaking, and you men and women listening. What are we? We are erect

creatures, bipeds from five to six feet high, weighing, most of us, from one hundred to two hundred pounds. These wonderful bodies of ours are able to move about, and do move about in a sea of air on this ball called earth, which is whirling through space. And these bodies are made—of what? Of flesh and blood we say. But we know they were once dust, and to dust will return. This body of mine, that body of yours, warm, living, pulsing, was once the earth men trod under their feet and plowed and sowed and reaped: and this body will return to that earth again.

Then, when this living dust becomes dust again, what of that far more wonderful thing, the life which animates it? And in reply, Solomon wrote the words of our text, "Thy life which was lent thee shall be demanded."

Did you ever ponder over the mystery of life? Is there, do men say, mystery in our religion? Surely there is mystery in religion, but mystery is everywhere about us in this world. We move in an atmosphere of mystery, and touch infinities every day. And the greatest of all mysteries is life itself. What is it? Where is it? Whence came it?

Whence could it come save from that infinity we call God?

I look at you and say you live. You look at me and say that I live. Really we never saw each other, but only see each other's bodies, the houses or the tabernacles in which dwells the life itself. We know these earthly tabernacles will return again to earth. Is it not all mysterious? You have life, the life is the you: I have life, the life is I. And yet we know not what it is, nor even where it dwells in our bodies. Think of this, try to grasp it. The life is the ego, the you, the I; and yet we know not its source and dwelling place.

Mystery? I say there is none greater than this, the mystery of life and thought and conscious existence. Who can solve it? I was not, I am. Whence came I? Whither shall I return? Will I always be, or will a deep dreamless sleep put out this flame of consciousness I call existence? And again Solomon says: "To know Thee, O God, is perfect righteousness; and to know Thy power is the root of immortality." Or, in the words of One greater than Solomon, Christ said in His great high priestly prayer: "And this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Then if these speak truly, "When our life which was lent us shall be demanded," we shall stand at the gates of immortality and enter into life eternal.

My hearers, this is the high and noble view taken of this mystery of life by the Church which Christ left to teach us. That is what the Church is in the world for; that is what Christ founded it for—to be and remain a continual witness for Him, to teach His gospel to men who are so strangely indifferent to eternal verities, to try to convince men of their own high destiny, that they are more than brutes, that they are sons of God, that *from* God they came forth, that *to* God they must return for judgment. That is why the Church sends its messengers into the dark places of the earth like the heart of Africa to teach savages, who have known only “cruel pagan hate,” to love and do good to their fellows instead of murdering them.

Look about you in the world and ask yourself if such a voice is not necessary? Do not most men look upon life “as a pastime and their time here a market for gain”? Is it not needful that a voice be raised to try to teach men, as Bishop Potter said, “to look after their souls as well as their carcasses”?

All intelligent men know that they are dust, and that to dust they must return. Yet they do not pause in the frantic chase of gold and gratification, but they make their time here a pastime and a market for gain, and say, even

as Solomon said they said in his day: "We must be getting every day."

Go with me to the marts of trade, to the market place, the stock exchange down there in Wall Street. What do you hear and see? Listen!

Before you reach the door you hear an unearthly din, hoarse shouts and cries, fierce voices rising and falling in discord. You go in, and up into the gallery; it is a busy day, an exciting day on change: you look down on a swaying, struggling, shrieking mass of frantic humanity. What is it all about? Listen to Solomon: "They count their time a market for gain, and they say, we must be getting every day." That howling mob down yonder is your evidence. For remember, it is not a mere livelihood they are seeking, not the praiseworthy earning of their daily bread by toil. No, they seek wealth, wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, yellow gold that their fingers of dust will clutch a few brief years and then loosen and leave—"when their lives, which were lent them, shall be demanded." With that gold, if they get it, most of them will pamper their bodies. They will buy all the gratifications of earth which their gold will obtain. Doing these things they will forget that eternity is just beyond. There in the stock exchange is the picture.

There the struggle for the material things of life. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy."

Contrasted with this, consider fairly the Christian view of life. What is the aim and end of earthly existence as Christ taught it, and His Church, witnessing for Him, still teaches it? May we not sum it up in these words spoken by Him who said He came to bring life and immortality to light? He said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (ye need) shall be added unto you." That is the Christian's philosophy of life, and the only philosophy which will avail, when our lives, which were lent us, shall be demanded.

Would you know wherein religion differs chiefly from irreligion? Recently I have come in contact with a little child of six, deformed, helpless, suffering almost constant pain. Her feet are drawn up against her chest, her little hands fold back, cramped, almost flat against her wrists. This child was sent, they said, to a great hospital for treatment. There she remained four months, growing worse instead of better. Relatives made an unexpected visit and found—what? They found this little helpless child, a bundle of misery, deformity, and pain, in a disgusting state of horrible filth and neg-

lect—suffering severely, growing worse. And none in that institution had kept her clean, or given her kindness. It seems incredible, but was true.

Was that a Christian hospital?

It *was not*, I need hardly say.

It was a secular institution, where the voice of prayer was never heard, where attendants were but hirelings, indifferent and often cruel. Nothing but religion, true, heartfelt religion, will cause men and women to care properly for such a child.

Again, in New York City, where I labored as curate in a great parish, I saw the same truth. My duties were largely on the east side among the very poor. At that time social settlement work was much exploited, and “slumming,” as it was called, became a society fad.

I saw society girls who came down there in silks, slumming. They lasted from two weeks to perhaps three months, then took up the next fad. Why? There was no religion in their service. The poor quickly came to detest them, and would sometimes slam the door in their faces.

Then I saw Salvation Army lasses come into that work. They did not come in silks: they did not ask those over-worked east side mothers if their husbands drank: but they did help them wash their dishes and clean up the children and

the rooms. More than once on dark stairways of great New York tenement houses I have almost fallen over kneeling women, Salvation Army girls, scrubbing the stairs for poor people who could give them no recompense but love—the greatest thing in the world.

What made the difference in these two classes? Religion. Nothing else. On the one hand love of God and of His suffering children, on the other simple faddishness—or in some settlements, philanthropy without religion, which always fails.

Only philanthropy *with* religion lasts. Mark that. Only true religion will make men and women serve, and *continue* to serve, others for Christ's sake—not for pay. Take away religion, and philanthropy grows cold and heartless and dies, just as a locomotive will soon lose power if you draw the fires, even though steam is up when fires are drawn. That is what real life means, true religion.

True Religion will send a bishop to the heart of Africa, even though he knows he may be murdered by the savages he came to help. Religion will send a Father Damien to the lepers, though he knows he will contract the fearful disease and die, as Father Damien did. Religion will cause refined and delicately nurtured women to labor in pagan hospitals, performing

menial services for loathsome patients who are suffering the consequences of their own vileness.

That's what Christ's religion is—and does.

That's what gives life, beauty, and strength, and glory and undying hope.

That's what Christianity is—to teach you and me, and all men everywhere, the sacredness and priceless worth of human life.

That is what life was lent us for, that we might value it and make it a thing of dignity and worth and beauty, not of cheap triviality and pleasure seeking; that we might make life fine, make it noble, make it splendid, and by divine grace make it God-like.

That, my Christian brethren, is what God sent His Son to teach all men. The infinite value and worth of all mankind—the love which serves, the faith which lifts, the hope which points to immortality, when this life He lent us shall be demanded.

THE THRESHING FLOOR

THE world often asks, "Why doesn't the Christian Church *do* something? Why does it not save human society? Why does it not really do what Christ sent it to do?"

I ask, "Why are *you* so blind?"

Look about you: See the Church at work everywhere—in its battle for God and the good—in which *you* should help instead of "knock."

Note the "C" in the letters "Y.M.C.A." and "Y.W.C.A." What does it mean? It means *Christ*, in whose name these and a thousand other similar works are done. From the upper windows of our new Y.W.C.A. you see another splendid building, the Y.M.C.A.—erected to serve young men; you also see a Christian church with a revolving cross of fire lifted on high; down Broadway another great building, the Navy Y.M.C.A., all built by Christ—through His servants; all pointing straight back to the hill of Calvary, the cross of the Christ who came to seek, to save, to bless mankind.

What blindness, or rather what perversity, is it that causes men to say His Church, His people, are doing *nothing* for humanity? Christians might and could and should do more, but they are now doing much. All over this world, in Christendom and also in the far-flung battle line of missions beyond the seas, Christ's people are working—striving to bring His truth to the souls of men. They expect and ask no return except the inner "Well done, My child," spoken by a still, small voice in the chambers of the soul. They go forth to build hospitals, schools, and churches to teach His way of life. They give money, labor, often life itself. All over the earth are great institutions, works of mercy and love, all pointing straight back to Calvary's cross as their inspiration and their ultimate cause.

Christians may have many faults. They do. They confess it. But Christians and Christianity are the only hope of this sin-cursed world, and of the men and women in it who know not their right hand from their left because they are blind to the real values of life.

Today I bring to your thoughts one particular phase of Christ's teaching. He is not only the God of Faith and Hope and Love. He is also the God of tender mercy and consolation.

In a certain gallery of Europe is a painting called "*Christus Consolator*"—Christ, the Consoler—before which few can stand without tears. There are those who say Christianity is a religion of sorrow. This of course is not true. Christianity seeks to *interpret* sorrow, but does not make it. This discourse is intended to look at life's problems from different angles, and to observe how our faith solves them. Today we take the figure of the threshing floor and for our

TEXT.—"*In the world ye shall have tribulation.*"
—St. John XVI, 33.

The words of our text were spoken by the world's Redeemer, Christ, the Son of Mary.

These words, to the average person, bear an unwelcome message.

Tribulation!

We don't like it.

But the question for us to face is not whether we like tribulation, but did Christ speak truth in these words or not? To that question there can be but one reply.

This is certain: the man who thinks he is going through life without tribulation or trouble will find his mistake sooner or later. For brethren, we are placed in this world, not to slide, but to climb, not for ignominious ease, but for brave self-conquest.

Many there are who don't relish this truth; but it is a fact. There are those who rebel at it. There are those, even, who threaten their Creator, and say (as it were) to the Maker of all things: "Because life is so full of trouble and mystery, because there is so much sorrow in the world, I won't believe in You."

And—they are not compelled to, though the loss is theirs.

Furthermore they have changed nothing by such rebellion, nor can they. They have made life not one whit easier for themselves, but harder. The same inevitable troubles come right along to all whether men defy their Creator and even deny His existence or not.

So we may as well make up our minds to it that, as Job says, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." In this world in which we find ourselves none can escape the conditions of human life, and none can find lasting satisfaction otherwise than by discharging life's inevitable tasks as best he may. We must face life's troubles, overcome them if we can, endure them if we must.

The Master-Interpreter of life said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Whether we like it or not, it's the truth. Trouble is in this world. It's here. It has come to many who hear me speak; it will come to all. Religion did

not and does not make it. Religion, at least the religion of Christ, simply faces it, meets it honestly and bravely, and, man-fashion, tries to understand its meaning and to learn its lessons. Our religion simply says: "If trouble comes, face it with courage and faith." Don't dodge; you can't anyway. Don't whine. Don't grieve overmuch; for we think trouble comes to make better men of us—strong men and women, noble, brave, and true. Therefore seek to know the meaning of trouble; seek to profit by its lessons. Don't try to bear it in stolid, sullen indifference, like the Stoics of old. Trust God. Believe He is, that we are His sons, and that even as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that trust in Him.

The sceptic and agnostic say to us: "All this is a delusion. You are trusting in a phantom, a figment of your imagination. Your hopes rather than your reason cause you to think there is a personal God Whose child you are."

The sceptic may conceivably be right. I don't *know* that he is not; but I don't *believe* he is. Yet this I do absolutely know: I am a happier man for my faith than the sceptic is without it. Any man is happier and stronger for his hope in the Everlasting. The American poet voices well this thought in words familiar to many of you:

"Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees,
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marble play;
Who hath not learned in hours of faith
That truth to sight and sense unknown;
That Life is ever conqueror over death,
That Love can never lose its own."

So let it be emphasized that whichever may be right, the unbeliever or the believer, the believer certainly has the happier side, the more hopeful side of the matter. It were better to be the most ignorant peasant, with a simple trust in God, than the most sophisticated and highly educated agnostic, with no hope in life's compensations beyond and no faith in things unseen.

But do not think from this for one moment that faith is found only among the ignorant. Among the world's greatest scholars and scientists are scores, hundreds, thousands of believers in the simple faith of Christ. I have quoted many. They are honest men, men whose sincerity can never be doubted. Comparatively few among the learned have found it possible to live in a world without faith in a Creator, and in a universe without a God.

But, having affirmed that man is born to trouble, and that great numbers of the world's greatest minds find this fact no cause for doubt-

ing the existence of a good God, it is very natural to ask: "Why should it be thus? *Why* does it so often happen, when all seems well with us, that there comes some great change, a blow, a shaking up in our lives, an earthquake which changes all things for us; some loss which bows the heart, which causes the tears to flow, and our steps to falter?"

We cannot answer with certainty.

We do not know absolutely.

But we may surmise. And in words immediately following our text, Christ gives point and direction to our surmise.

He is talking to His friends, His best earthly friends. He is revealing to them the very depths of that wondrous nature so profound that men in all the ages have believed Him divine. He says one simple sentence of unearthly beauty. It contains a certain word which we who have studied it think is the key which unlocks the mystery of pain and sorrow and trouble in this world and life. This sentence we chose for our text. He said "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but"—But what? "In this world ye shall have tribulation, but," He continued, "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Now what is the key word in that sentence?

It is, I think, the word "tribulation." What does it mean? In English it is simply a synonym

of the word trouble, meaning practically the same. But dig down—go back to the roots. Whence comes that word “tribulation”? It comes from the Latin *tribulum*. And its original meaning is—a threshing floor. Does not that throw light upon His meaning?

Today, in America, we have no such things as threshing floors. We have threshing machines, though perhaps few here ever saw one. But the threshing machine was one of the most common sights of my boyhood, as I was born and nurtured in an agricultural part of this country—the beautiful state of Iowa. And a threshing machine was, to my boyish eyes, an awe-inspiring sight.

Those who have lived always in cities and have never lived upon a real farm have missed a genuinely interesting experience. Believe me there is no more beautiful sight than great fields of corn and wheat waving and rustling in the summer breezes, reminding one of the words in Holy Writ, “The valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing.” I have heard the great corn fields “laugh and sing” as the winds played over them like a great harp. And on a quiet, moist, very warm night in summer, I have actually heard the corn grow; a remarkable but true statement which can be verified by many a farmer who has heard on a still night

the peculiar, faint, popping sound made by the rapidly expanding joints in the stalk as the corn is making its most rapid growth.

And then there are the waving fields of wheat, ripening to a golden yellow, thousands of acres as far as the eye can reach, extending to the distant horizon; the summer breeze ripples the yellow surface as the wind ripples the sea; cloud shadows fly across the golden expanse, as they do across the surface of the ocean, or over a range of hills or mountains seen in the distance.

It is a beautiful and impressive sight.

Then come, first the harvesters, and after them the threshers. The threshing machines are gorgeously colored affairs as large as small freight cars. They are run by steam now, though formerly they were run by horse power. The sheaves of wheat are fed into the great hoppers by two men. With a rattle and roar the machine begins, and in a moment the endless chain of the elevator at one end begins to throw the straw and chaff into an ever increasing pile, while at one side of the thresher a steady stream of golden wheat pours out—gold in more than color, for it is worth gold. It is the chief food of the world, one of the many good gifts of the God of nature to His children.

Such is a modern threshing machine. I have dwelt, perhaps, too long on its description, but you will pardon me when you realize that it was one of the most interesting sights of my childhood. Among my earliest memories is that of watching the threshers; of standing with other boys under the elevator and catching handfuls of the straw as it first fell; then as the pile increased to enormous size, burrowing under it, playing hide and seek about it, and sliding down the stack.

This is the threshing machine, the *tribulum* of modern days. The *tribulum* of ancient days was a level, hard-packed earthen floor, on which the wheat was placed and beaten with flails, or sometimes tramped out with horses.

Why beaten? If the wheat were sensitive and could speak, would it not cry out, "Why smitest thou me?" Why beaten? Why the blow upon blow on the threshing floor, or the mechanical blows of the toothed and whirling cylinder in the modern threshing machine?

Why? To separate the chaff from the wheat; to separate the worthless straw from the golden grain which is the food of the nations. The blow hurts, or would hurt if the unthreshed sheaves were sensitive to pain; but the blow is necessary, for it alone brings out the precious

grain and makes the wheat of value because it takes away the straw and chaff.

Remember now, a *tribulum* is a threshing floor. Recall again Christ's words to His disciples, and all who would follow them: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (from *tribulum*).

Why, Master and Interpreter of life, must we have tribulation? Why?

To separate the chaff from the wheat, the worthless from that which is of value. This, we Christians believe, is why. This is why it is everlastingly true that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

Trouble is real and hard to bear or it is not genuine trouble. It means blows and loss and tears, and often sleepless nights and weary days. It hurts. But—it separates the wheat from the chaff and straw in our characters. It is meant, we believe, to make us worthy to inherit with the saints in light and life.

Tribulation is not easy to endure, but as was said in the beginning of this discourse, we think God put us in this world not to slide, but to climb.

Brethren, whether we are right or not in this Christian explanation of life's sorrows, it is certainly a noble and splendid thing to believe it. It gives life value, dignity, horizon,

outlook, and uplook. It makes living worth while. I say again (and mean it), I had rather be the most unlearned peasant and believe this, than to be the world's greatest scholar or scientist and not believe it. I had rather plod with the humble all the days of my life and possess this noble faith, than to sit in the seat of the mighty without it.

Now just a few thoughts on the words Christ said immediately after He uttered our text. Consider a moment the expression, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." To put it all together: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

What a clarion call of courage are those words, "Be of good cheer." They mean exactly the same, I take it, and say it reverently, as our modern expression, "Cheer up." Some say that latter expression is slang. If it is, it's the sort one can approve. "Cheer up" and "Forget it" are, in my honest opinion, two of the best expressions ever uttered in any language. Christ said "Be of good cheer," and He added words that seem to be meant as a reason for good cheer: "I have overcome the world."

What is the significance and force of these latter words? This, I think: He had overcome, conquered all the sufferings and sorrows life

could bring. How? By His absolute trust in and submission to the will of God His Father and His unchanging love to God and man. In another place He tells us that we should be partakers with Him. Then if it be true that we will be partakers with Him, we, with Him, may overcome the world as He did. His Father is also our Father. If we are His, we are bound up in Him, and shall conquer the world, and all its temptations and perplexities and trouble by the power He imparts to every sincere believer. That power is what we call the grace of God.

Brethren, if we do this, and when we do, another great promise of His will come true in our lives. He said "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." No, not as the world gives, for as we have often said, the world's peace comes and goes with the world's changes, the world's peace is built on the world's uncertain conditions. But Christ's peace is the very peace of God and changes not, because it is built on the everlasting Rock of Ages, on God's promises, which are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Fellow-mortals, fellow-travelers in life's rough way—brethren in Christ, there are lives which have found this peace. Most of us have

seen such lives. There are men and women who know and have known that His promises are true. In the world they have had tribulation, the *tribulum*, the threshing floor. They have walked the way of sorrow. They have stumbled, and even fallen sometimes; they have, perhaps, doubted God's goodness when the blows came fast and hard.

But after the night, the morning; after the storm the calm; after the clouds the sunshine; after the wounds the balm.

Is it not worth something to believe this? Is not religion worth while if this is true, and we can grasp it and live by it? Well, then remember that all this is true, if the world's supreme Teacher spoke truth. That is Christianity. That is exactly what Christ's religion is intended to mean, ought to mean, to your soul and mine, what it may mean and does mean and has meant to all those who have found the inner secret of the Most High. It is what it may mean in every one of our lives if we want it to, want it earnestly enough to fulfil the conditions Christ gave.

May God give to every one of us strength to believe this and live by it.

In the world we may expect tribulation, the threshing floor, the separation of the wheat from the chaff. But be of good cheer. He over-

came the world, and He said by His holy apostle, "If ye suffer *with* Me ye shall also reign with Me." That is enough. It is the best solution of life's dark mysteries of pain and sorrow the world has ever known or ever can know. It will solve them for you and me.

HUSKS

A LENTEN SERMON

TEXT.—“*And he fain would have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat.*”—St. Luke XV, 16.

HUSKS!

The husks the swine did eat!

A swineherd, and living on these husks!

What a fate was that for a young man who had once been beloved, protected, cared for in a thousand ways by all the surroundings which a good home could provide!

Consider especially what this would mean among the Jews, and this young fellow *was* a Jew.

As it was then, so it is now, the swine is regarded by Jews as the type of all uncleanness. No deadlier insult can be offered a Jew than to compare him with swine. And the swineherd (to them) has fallen to the very abyss of degradation. He was at the very bottom in the social scale.

So we can understand in this parable of the prodigal son that Christ meant to picture to His Jewish hearers the life of one who had fallen so low that he could fall no lower. The prodigal son was sent to care for swine; nothing more need be said.

Yet this was the position in which this young fellow found himself. He not only tended swine, he ate swine's food: "He fain would have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat." Words would utterly fail to tell the detestation of the Jews for such a man. He simply was outside the pale.

Now consider the contrast, as this young prodigal must have considered it with bitterness unspeakable when he allowed himself to think. He remembered better days. It is always a bitter thing to look back on better days in the past than are the days of the present. Especially true is this if the present is our own fault, as it was with this prodigal. For this reason prodigals do not want to think; they do all in their power to drive thought away. They will drown their memories in drink, in gambling, revelry, debauchery—anything to keep them from thinking.

But still, thoughts *will* sometimes come, as they did to this prodigal. In the lonely days of herding swine he could not help recalling the

past. He would remember the house of his father, from whom he had departed so far. That father's heart had been deeply wounded by the ingratitude of a son who could so lightly and carelessly esteem the father-love and the father's house. In that house, the prodigal would remember, he had been tenderly nurtured and cared for. Friends, love, plenty—all were freely his. And the only return the father asked was a reasonable love and obedience.

But the time came to that young man, as it has come to so many young men since, when he grew dissatisfied. He was, no doubt, what is sometimes called "high spirited." *He* would not brook parental restraint. *He* wouldn't be tied to his mother's apron-strings. *He* was what is sometimes called "high-strung"—in the sons of the rich—and merely ugly and vicious in the sons of the poor.

So this young man left the father's house, with all of what he would consider its irksome restraints and its old-fashioned ideas. It was too far behind the times, in his not very valuable opinion. He took his share of the estate and went out into the world. That share was not his because he had earned it but because the father gave it to him. He appeared to care little for the father's sorrow and the mother's tears; he cared less for the love of brothers

and sisters and friends. He was going to have his try at the world, the great, big, alluring world. He was going to see life. He was going to sow his wild oats. He'd show them.

Linger a moment more on this young man's departure. Picture it as it has been repeated thousands of times, in its main essentials, in the centuries since Christ spoke that parable. There would be the white-haired father at the door, the mother, her eyes swollen with tears, brothers and sisters waving him farewell, friends and companions bidding him godspeed. We can see him breaking away from the last loving embrace of his mother and darting hurriedly down the road, ashamed lest the tears which possibly dimmed his own eyes might be discovered; keeping his face turned from the eager eyes at the old home lest he should betray what he considered unmanly weakness. He comes to a bend in the road, pauses a moment, turns and gives a last look backward. He still sees the group at the door watching him. He waves a last good-bye, turns, and disappears from sight.

Out into the world at last!

Free! Free from restraint; all the old irksome home restraints. Free from the reproofs of his father; free from the eyes of his mother, watching so anxiously and tenderly lest he fall

into evil ways. How delicious was that first feeling of liberty! Now he would have his try at the world, and see life and make his fortune. Then he would return some day rich and famous, and show the home folks something.

Well, he had his try. He saw life. He sowed his wild oats.

Draw the curtain over the years of his debauchery. Lift it again and behold him the companion of swine and filling his belly with the husks the swine did eat.

My hearers, if ever a word picture was drawn true to life it is drawn in this picture Christ gives us of the prodigal son. Christ spoke it two thousand years ago yonder in Palestine. It might have been spoken but yesterday here in America, so true is it to life in all ages and among all races. How many hundreds, thousands, of young men today here in America are like that one in this parable. How many have left the protection and love and care of the old home, and have spent their inheritance, not their own earnings but their father's gift, in riot and dissipation. How many hundreds and thousands at this moment are rapidly traveling the same downward road, leaving the plenty of the father's house and sowing the wind, to reap the whirlwind, and then, to live on husks.

How pitiful it is to see one throw his life away! How sad to see a man or a woman living on the husks of life—and oftentimes satisfied with husks, apparently. And they are not all prodigals, in the world's opinion, who are living on husks. There are thousands of men and women whom the world esteems, who have an excellent standing in the social scale, but who still are living on husks, and not on bread.

Husks!—the husks of life! Strange it is to see so many content with them.

Suppose we saw a farmer in his corn-field carefully picking his corn, and then preserving the husks while he threw away the rich golden ears; would we not say "That man is an ignorant fool, or insane"? If insane, he is not to blame; if he is ignorant he has no business to be so, for he knows, or should know, better. Or suppose you saw a miller, after the wheat was ground, throwing away the flour, rich in gluten and starch and mineral salts, and retaining the bran, mere husks of woody fiber. Again we would have the right to say, "That man is an ignorant fool, or insane." If insane he is not at fault, but if he is ignorant he is at fault, for he has no business to be ignorant in his chosen work.

And yet I seriously affirm that that is what I have seen nearly every day of my life. That

is what large numbers of people are doing with their lives. They are throwing away all that is best in life, keeping but the husks, living on those husks instead of bread, living like swine oft-times, and living among swine and eating swine's food when all the time in the Father's house is enough and to spare.

We see many strange things in this world if we go about with our eyes open. Life is a constant panorama to the thoughtful man. I have seen what scripture describes as beggars on horseback and princes afoot. I have seen what another scripture calls "a gathering that scattereth and a scattering that gathereth." I have seen him that gave much grow the richer for his giving. But of all the strange things we see in this world, the strangest, to me, is to see men throw away the richest things of life, the bread of life, and live on husks.

For, my hearers, as God is true and loving, life may be rich and full and sweet to the man or woman who uses it rightly, who has found the secret of true living, who has found the kernel of life and rejects the husks. But life becomes dull and flat and stale and unprofitable to the man or woman who has missed that secret of true living, and who is content to live on husks.

Most of us know this is true, have seen its

truth. Do not most of us know people who seem to have every worldly blessing, everything money can buy, every advantage and opportunity socially and intellectually, and yet who tell us they find the world stale and life insipid; men and women whose discontented, unhappy faces bear witness they are speaking truly? And do we not know others, a few choice spirits, who in spite of poverty, and misfortune, and heart-breaking sorrow often, have still seemed to have found the kernel of life, and are happy in spite of all these things? I believe most of us have seen this. Why is it? The difference is simply this: The one is living on bread, the bread of life, and the other is living on husks. The one is far away from the Father's house, the other is living *in* the Father's house. The one is incredibly foolish, the other is wise.

Who then are some of these who are living on husks?

First let us speak of such prodigals as this one in the parable, those who are living in open rebellion and sin against their Father, God their Creator. There are young men and women too by the thousand, who are like the prodigal in this parable. How many a young man plunges into a life of filth and calls it sowing wild oats, calls it seeing life, and other

pleasant names, when it were more truly called seeing death! Like the young prodigal in our text, they may have given up their homes; or perhaps they regard their homes merely as a convenience, a place to eat and sleep and to wheedle as much money as possible from often unwise parents. They have abandoned the companionship of brothers and sisters and decent friends, and chosen that of vile men, relinquishing perhaps the love of a good wife, modest and kind and true, for the purchased companionship of filthy harlots. They have given up honest work perhaps, service to the world and their fellows, which is service to the Father to whom service is due, and have become idlers, drones, parasites on human society. Such men often say the world owes them a living, but before the world is through with them they usually find it pretty hard work to collect the bill.

Such a life many and many a man is living today. He calls it seeing life, seeing the world. And terrible will it be when the awakening comes, and he sees what a fool he has been, as the awakening came to this prodigal in the parable.

Should any hear my voice to whom these world-voices are calling—calling away from the father's house, let me counsel you to re-

member the inevitable awakening which must come.

Then consider the memories. The prodigal looks back over an irreparable past, a past of stained and mis-spent years which can never be restored, no matter what the future may hold for him. Think of the bitterness when he finds himself without money, so-called friends gone, health shattered, perhaps a wrecked and palsied body and the chains of fearful appetites fastened upon him like chains of steel.

He is bankrupt in purse, bankrupt in health, bankrupt in honor, bankrupt in character and reputation; sometimes kicked, cuffed, reviled by those who have enriched themselves at his expense and fattened on the profits of his degradation.

All this is no phantasy of the imagination. It is fact. I have seen all this myself, as many who hear me speak have seen it. I have seen it in my own city—have seen men kicked from the door of saloons in which they had spent their last cent. I have seen the prodigal, first in his father's house, then departing into the far country, finally living among the swine. He has come to my door, asking for money for food—he who a few years before had an excellent home and a good income. Today in his twenties he is an old man. His hands tremble

from drink. He is filthy, tattered, living on husks, begging at the door the scraps that would be thrown to swine. I have seen in large cities these poor prodigals, wrecks of men, actually hunting out from the garbage cans in the street the broken, rejected food meant to be taken away and given to swine. With my own eyes I have seen that. Perhaps you have.

These, many of them, are those once counted as "high-spirited" by silly, brainless women, "high-strung" young men, who could not brook parental authority and the wholesome restraint of the home. So they left it, squandered not only what money they may have had, but also squandered health, honor, good name, self respect—everything which makes life pleasant and worth living.

And something like this, no doubt, was the condition of the prodigal in the parable. Then came the first ray of hope, for we read that illuminating sentence—"He came to himself."

"When he came to himself!"

Then he saw what a fool he had been. Then he spoke the first sensible words doubtless that he had spoken since he left his father's house. He said, "In my Father's house is enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. Fool, fool that I have been!" Then came that tremendous

assertion, "*I will arise*—I will arise and go to my Father."

"I will arise!"

Mighty, transforming resolve! "No longer will I live among swine and live on swine's food. No longer will I grovel in filth. *I will arise* and stand upon my feet once more. I will arise and be a man, not a beast. My life is marred and stained and broken. All these years of strength and beauty have been wasted. They are lost years—worse than lost, for they will leave their mark on mind and brain and heart and body as long as I live. My life is crippled, and can never be all it might have been; but nevertheless, *I will arise*; there is still a best possible left, and that best possible which is left I shall attain. I will be absolutely honest and make no excuses. I will say: 'Father, I have sinned: make me as a servant henceforth. Only, take me back. Give me one more chance. Let me make all that can yet be made of my wasted life—broken, crippled, almost self-destroyed by my own folly and insane perversity.' "

That, brethren, was the spirit in which the prodigal returned, the spirit of true penitence, confession, and self-condemnation.

And just because it was the right spirit the father received him. Nay, mark this—the father saw him when he was yet a long way off,

and went out to meet that home-sick boy, who once an innocent child, had nestled in his arms, now a wounded, penitent prodigal, returning at last to the father's house.

That, Christ meant to teach, is the attitude of God to all His wandering children when they honestly repent, and return. That, my hearers, is the heart of this parable. I have heard that when it has been read by General Booth in prison services, some of the most hardened criminals have broken down and sobbed like children—and I can well understand it.

This is the main point I emphasize today. We may think, and truly, that we are not prodigals, yet all have wandered more or less. Christ gave this parable to show God's willingness—nay God's *eagerness*—to meet us all half-way, if only we turn and *re*-turn to Him. None of us here this morning perhaps was ever such a prodigal as was this one. Possibly some may be thinking, "Why such a discourse to Christians?—I am not living among swine, nor on swine's food." Very likely that is true. But not one of us here today but has fallen short of what he might have been, what in his highest moments he feels he could have been. Not one of us but has eaten husks sometimes. And therefore I affirm there is not one of us but needs to reflect upon the lessons taught by this parable,

even though we are Christians and in God's house.

Lent is the season appointed by the Church of God that we may particularly think upon these things. The Church placed this parable in the Ash Wednesday lesson, and says to us in Lent, "Turn—*re*-turn to the Father's house." You may not be living on swine's food, but you have perhaps become careless and indifferent. You have fallen into evil ways, or careless ways that lead to evil. The voices of the world are ever near, ever calling you; and the song of the redeemed in your heart is heard faintly from afar, perhaps only now and then, perhaps heard not at all. You may feel that you have lost, or are losing, the first freshness of your Christian life, the joy and peace which should be yours. If so—turn. *Re*-turn to the Altar. Come back with new devotion to the things which are good, and true, and lovely, and of good report. Come back to the life that is earnest and true, the life of faithful worship and sincere service to God. Seek once again the Father's house, enter its door with thanksgiving and praise. Say, as did the prodigal, "*I will arise*"—I too will arise, and stand erect, and go to my Father with rejoicing. I will serve. I will thank God I have self-respect enough to believe that I am His child. I will enter His

courts with praise. I will learn to rejoice in my faith; for that is true of the Christian who has found the secret of Christian living. My religion *shall not* be an empty husk. I shall have its reality.

And the Father will see *you*—will see *us*—even when we are a great way off. He will come to meet us, saying, “This my son was lost and is found. He was dead, and is alive again.”

And here in this sacred place, before the altar and the cross, we shall cast aside our imperfect past, and reconsecrate our lives anew to Him who died thereon, because He loves us with an everlasting love.

A MISUNDERSTOOD MAN

IN a recent *Atlantic* is an article every Christian should read. It is entitled "Gods of the Moment" and is by Bernard Iddings Bell.

Dr. Bell is president of one of our Church colleges, and is one of our ablest men among the clergy. He is rapidly building up that once moribund institution, and is much in demand as a speaker in the East.

In that article one passage merits special thought. He says: "We twentieth century people are soothingly immersed in the cult of comfort. Ours is a steam-heated, well-lighted, much upholstered era. We ward off the bumps, plane the sharp corners, insist upon ease—without which all else is intolerable. This whole cult" (he continues) "is petty, ignoble, unworthy of human nature. Some revolt against this everlasting softness, crying out for a God who loves not padding—but they are few."

Now that is rather an old-fashioned point of view—enduring hard things for the sake of

self-discipline, yet personally I would rather be considered old-fashioned today than otherwise. Indeed, in his extremely complacent and self-satisfied and boastfully "frank" age, I would prefer to be called "Victorian"—or even "Mid-Victorian"—which is anathema to the great majority at present. For to be Victorian is at least to have some reserves, some reticences, even may I say, some decency, regarding the more intimate things of life. This discourse, with which some will disagree, is, if you please, somewhat Victorian in its point of view, and is meant to be.

Over against this thing Dr. Bell calls the "Cult of Comfort," this "much upholstered era" in which, he says, we "ward off the bumps, plane off the sharp corners, and insist upon ease," let me give a vivid contrast, absolutely true, of a nobler type which exists, even today.

In college days I knew a young man, his father a banker, who, when that father offered him a college course the day of his high school graduation, said: "Father, I thank you for the offer. I intend to go through college, but 'on my own.' I shall work my way or not go."

Let me add that *he* did not tell me this; his brother, one of my best college friends, told me.

And he did it. He worked on a ranch that summer and saved his wages. He went from

Denver, his home, to Northwestern University at Chicago, on his bicycle, he said to save money, to see the country, to increase his health and strength.

All through his course he worked, waited on table for his board, mowed lawns, and did other odd jobs. And mark this—at *any time* he could have written his father and had a check by return mail for the rest of his course.

He had no time to be a "rah-rah boy." He did find time for reasonable recreation, a good play, a concert, tennis, a swim. He was not a "frat" man, believed them time-wasters and undemocratic—as Princeton did in abolishing them. He did not aspire to win any dance prizes. But I'll tell you what he was. He was a *man*, the very joy and pride of his father's heart; and he was as near the opposite of those who follow what President Bell called the "cult of comfort" as can be imagined.

Is any father here who would not be proud of such a son? He would be worth more than a million to any of us. Nay, you cannot measure him in terms of money. That father is one of the men on earth I envy.

Some parent may say (as a mother once said to me), "I would not *allow* my son to wait on table in college, to take the position of a servant."

To which the sufficient answer is found in St. Matthew 20, where Christ said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister"; "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

Did Christ know, or not?

Are we Christians, or not?

But today let us speak of another son, one in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

But not the prodigal, rather that other brother, the elder son, the one who stayed at home, helped his father—and then rebelled when the fatted calf was killed to make a feast for the returned prodigal.

The purpose of this discourse is to defend this much misunderstood man, a man who has been greatly maligned. I will assume that all know the story.

This other brother stayed at home, worked hard, helped his father on the old place, and never found it necessary to sow wild oats.

He has been abused most unjustly. He has been called mean, selfish, contemptible, and a dog-in-the-manger. I do not believe it and never have believed it. Whenever such epithets have been hurled at him in my hearing, the old adage has always come that "invective is the easiest

form of oratory." For mark: These hard names are aimed at a son who never gave his father a moment's worry, nor caused his mother to shed a tear. They are not the result of straight thinking, but of superficial thinking. Moreover they put a premium on dissipated sons and a discount on steady sons.

The boy who goes wild may be more picturesque.

He often is.

He also may have an attractive personality, and appeal to flapper mentality. But even though the prodigal reforms, I would rather tie to the boy who is level-headed enough not to spend his inheritance in dissipation. All rejoice when a prodigal reforms, particularly if he *stays* reformed; but give me the boy who has sense enough not to *need* reforming. I would trust him first every time.

TEXT.—"*But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf:*

"And he (the father) said unto him: Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."—St. Luke XV, 31-32.

You often hear it said that the pulpit teaches unrealities, that the Bible is impractical: that

religion is today no longer in touch with real life.

Yet listen to a short newspaper clipping. This clipping tells a story of life today which parallels the parable of the Prodigal Son given to the world two thousand years ago. That parable has reflected life in all the ages since and it does the same today. I will conceal the name, simply saying it is the family of a well known piano manufacturer. No doubt there are pianos of that name in some of your homes.

"ONCE WEALTHY PIANO MANUFACTURER SENT TO JAIL.

"New York, Sept. 17.—(Special.) —, piano manufacturer, sat on a plank in the '10-day' cell in Jefferson Market Prison yesterday, surrounded by drunks and tramps, detained on the one day one dollar plan. All that stood between this once wealthy club member and man about town, and his liberty, was a paltry \$5 note. But he didn't have it and nobody seemed disposed to advance it for him. So he remained there.

"He was locked up for a drunken assault. Mr.—waited wearily in court yesterday for somebody to come and release him, but when the prison closed for the night nobody had put in an appearance with the requisite \$5.00, and the man who had squandered thousands was forced to stretch himself on the slanting pine platform that answers as a bed for the inmates, and sleep with a score or more of unkept bedfellows."

There is the prodigal son brought down to date. He was once manager of a large business which his father had built up and left to him. He took his inheritance and spent it on riotous living. Now behold him in a common prison sitting beside and eating with tramps, drunks,

harlots, and petty thieves. He was unable to raise even \$5.00 to pay his fine. If that is not a lesson for those who do not see the folly of the prodigal's course of life, where can it be found?

This morning, however, we turn our chief attention to the elder brother, the boy who stayed at home, worked hard, and lived a decent life. Now we hear from him—and very naturally. I have a great deal of sympathy for that elder brother. I have heard and read many sermons about him, not one doing him justice. For they all have condemned him unreservedly. Nay, some Christian teachers have called that elder brother a prig—mean, narrow, selfish, unbrotherly, contemptible—and many other very un-Christian names.

Now put yourself in that elder brother's place. You stayed at home and worked hard; you knew the toil and sweat of the hot fields; you lived a decent life and tried to be obedient to your father, whom you respected and loved.

Then there was this younger brother. Perhaps he was more attractive than you. Very likely he was a gay, charming, irresponsible boy—captivating, but undependable. He wouldn't stay at home—not he. That might do for old fogies, old-fashioned people, but he was going

to see the world, going somewhere else, *anywhere* else, and see life and get rich. So he coaxed the father to do an extremely unwise thing, to give his inheritance to him in advance—before he had sense enough to know how to use it.

And the weak and doting father did this foolish thing.

So this younger son, with the money jingling in his pockets, money he had never earned and hadn't sense enough to take care of, left the old home. The parents stand at the door. You can see him go swinging gaily down the road on his way to see life and make a fortune. At the bend in the road he turns, waves his hand and is gone. The world was his oyster. He would show these old-fashioned people.

Time passes. The old home is lonely.

But presently disturbing stories came back—rumors, reports of evil companions and fast living. Lines deepen on the father's face; the mother's hair whitens. Never a night but she thinks of her wandering boy as her head sought her pillow. Never a day but that heart-felt prayer ascends from that father and mother that the prodigal might still justify their faith in him, their love and care.

Think of it, the bitter, scalding tears that are shed by mothers over wandering boys—and

girls too. Thousands of mothers in this land, and all lands, will lie down tonight, their faces wet with tears for the little boy that once nestled so innocent and pure in their bosoms, their last thought tonight, as always, "Where is my wandering boy tonight?"

Now all these things must have been apparent to that elder brother. He was no fool, but a steady, hardworking, obedient son. It must have stirred honest indignation in his heart. Then, too, he must have felt the disgrace this half-baked young prodigal was bringing to the family. He must have been angered too, by the idiotic waste of his father's hard-earned money which that brother was flinging away on swine; for the prodigal was a companion of swine in human form, and spent his money on two-footed swine, before he sank to the occupation of an actual swineherd of four-footed swine, so much despised among the Jews.

So I think this elder son had just cause for feeling indignant, when, after years had passed, he came in from the fields one day tired with hard work, heard music and dancing—perhaps saw the calf-skin hanging on the fence—and was told that fatted calf had been killed to make a feast for the boy who, he would naturally feel, deserved anything but a feast.

Can you not understand that elder brother's feelings? His reaction was most natural. I do not say that it was the most generous attitude, but I do say it was a natural feeling and had a certain element of justice in it. And further, I think those are extremely superficial who say the elder brother was a prig, selfish, unjust, and contemptible. To that elder brother it would appear that the father was putting a premium on wickedness, and was actually rewarding the prodigal for his dissolute life.

So, smarting under a sense of injustice, and weary with the day's work, he spoke very naturally. Yet I believe he was, if not in the wrong, at least not taking the highest and wisest view of the matter.

For after all it was his brother, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood; and though that brother had been a fool, he had already paid bitterly, and in coming years would have to pay still more bitterly the cost of his incredible and insane folly.

It *was* his brother.

Note how beautifully this is brought out by Christ in the parable. When the elder son heard the festivities and the cause, he had not referred to the prodigal as his brother, but said to the father, "As soon as this, *thy son*, was come"; and the father replied gently: "It was

meet that we should rejoice—for this, *thy brother*, was dead and is alive.”

After all, this poor, broken, filthy swineherd, who came limping back from his adventure at seeing life, was his brother; and this brother had already suffered much for his folly. He had known hunger, contempt, swine's companionship, swine's food, and loss of self-respect—almost the greatest loss one can experience. Surely in order to try to make the most left of his disgraced and stained and crippled life it was not very much, nor too much, to give him a feast, if for nothing else, to help increase his self-respect a little, and brace him for the long years of hard work ahead in regaining his lost position in the eyes of men.

Then, too, it should never be forgotten (though possibly the elder brother did not yet know it) that this prodigal had come home in genuine repentance and humility. He had not asked to be taken as a son, but only to be a servant henceforth in the house where he had once been a beloved son. We must assume his sincerity. That confession and genuine penitence had done much to restore him in his father's esteem.

For, brethen, we can forgive almost anything if the wrong doer will confess the wrong and show sincere regret and amendment, if only he

will tell the whole truth about it and not seek to deceive, nor make weak excuses, nor blame others—as so many do. So long as deception continues and wrongs are unconfessed there can be no confidence and trust; and without the fullest trust and confidence love can never have its full fruition.

Let me here relate two incidents of my own rectorship to illustrate what I mean; to show a weak and unwise way to deal with an erring child, and a wise and strong way.

A mother came to me for counsel saying her son was untruthful, that she could not tell whether he spoke the truth or not in the most trifling matters. I asked her if she had first reasoned with him, and then punished him if he persisted in lying. She said, "Oh, no! I couldn't bear to have him know *I* know he lies. I always pretend to believe all he says. I believe if he always thinks his mother trusts him he will get over it some day."

But he didn't. That "some day" has never come as yet; and that boy, now a young man, is known in the community as a notorious liar; nobody trusts him. All, I believe, because a weak and foolish mother coddled him, polly-annaed him, and pretended to believe him when she knew better, and should have faced him down in his lies and punished him for them.

Also, a broken-hearted father once came to me saying his eldest son, whom recently he had taken into his business, was stealing from him. That father sobbed like a child, and I assure you it is a terrible thing to see a mature man do that. He asked my advice, though I was younger than he, almost a stranger, and he was not even a member of my parish. If ever I silently and earnestly prayed for wisdom I did then.

"Does your son know you know?" I asked.

"No, and I feel I can't tell him. It will be the end of all confidence between us."

And I said: "You *must* tell him, hard as it will be. Superficial remedies won't cure deep-seated diseases. You can't cure a cancer without going to the roots. A dentist can't cure a diseased tooth without going to the bottom of the decay; if he fills it without doing so it means more trouble and worse. I believe you should tell your boy you *know*, and punish him by taking the business out of his hands, not entrusting funds to him again until he proves to you that he can be trusted. That is the best counsel I can give."

The father did this. Oddly enough, though we both lived on the Atlantic seaboard and in the same city, I met him next five years later on Broadway, Los Angeles, where he had come

for a vacation trip. There he told me his son had "stood the gaff" (as he expressed it) and had made good, that now he trusted him completely.

My hearers, you can't remedy a wrong or cure a sin by pretending it isn't there. Pollyanna-ism won't work with deadly sin. Keep to realities; face the worst and make it better, even best, by God's assisting grace. No wrong-doer will become a right-doer without confession, repentance, and amendment so far as possible. And herein was the strength of the prodigal's position. He did admit he had made a failure: he didn't ask for restoration as a son, but only to take the place of a servant. We must suppose him sincere or the parable is meaningless. There and then the great father-love met him and restored him to a son's position—on trust. But that son knew, unless he was an utter idiot, that he would have to make good. The father would watch him—couldn't help it. He would have to make good and he knew it.

Surely after such absolute admission of his faults on the part of a younger brother it would have been nobler for the elder brother not to begrudge him the feast, the fatted calf, and the festivities. And I don't believe the elder brother did so after he learned all the facts.

Still again, as the father said, this prodigal had been as one lost and found, as one dead come to life again. That is worth considering. For there is a very true sense in which sin may be looked upon as a sickness; sickness both of soul and of body.

Let us suppose that younger brother had been for years suffering from some deadly disease. We all know how, when one member of a family is seriously ill, all the other members of that family will do everything in their power to aid in restoring the health of the sick one. No sacrifice of time or money or labor is too great. Nay, if it requires all the family income, even all the family capital, to obtain for the sick one such medical care or travel and attention as may overcome the disease, how gladly these things will be sacrificed if only the health of that ailing one may be restored.

May we not look upon this prodigal, and all prodigals, as suffering from disease—the disease of sin?

Now think straight. That doesn't excuse them. They *chose* the disease. But that very choosing indicates that they were more or less unbalanced, for surely no well balanced man will choose a course of life which brings inevitable ruin. Whence we see the deep significance of the words of the parable, "When he came

to himself." During all those years of wandering among the swine the prodigal had *not* been himself. He had been sick in soul; now he was restored as from the dead. It was meet they should rejoice.

Such things as this I can well imagine the father would say to the elder son, perhaps adding to the words, "Thy brother was lost and is found, was dead and is alive," something like this: "After all, my first-born, *he* has had the worst of it. All these years of dissipation must leave their mark on him, body and soul. Whatever he may accomplish in coming years his life is crippled by these worse than wasted years. His future will be stultified. Look at him, gaunt, poverty-stricken, his face seamed with the lines of sin and suffering, his self-respect gone, pleading to be a servant in the house where he *was* a son. Surely that is a sufficient humiliation. Let us help him to make the best possible of his broken life and shattered prospects. Let us receive him as a son. Let us show our joy in these festivities. We can afford to be generous. Let us try to rehabilitate his self-respect and forget, so far as we can, his fearful mistakes. Be sure *he* will never forget them. The bitter memory of his sufferings will remain always with him. The physical consequences of his sins will always harass him. In

the most sacred hours of his life, when perhaps in coming years he takes his own little ones in his arms and looks into their innocent faces, the awful fear that his sins will develop in them physically or mentally or morally, will sting him like the stings of scorpions. He has been punished much; he will be punished more. Let us do all we can to heal the wounds."

Thus, my hearers, I can imagine that father reasoning with the elder son, and reasoning not in vain. That elder son was a good son—a far, far better son than the prodigal. I admire him immensely more. I even admire his first indignant outburst; it was perfectly natural and I respect him for it. But second thoughts, which are usually better, would convince him the father was right.

But there is one serious mistake which the father had made. You recall the words of the elder son to the father, "Thou never gavest me even a kid to make merry with my friends."

Therein that father, and all such fathers, made a very great mistake. Parents should never forget that their children crave and need wholesome recreation and amusement. And that recreation, to be wholesome, is best in their own homes with well-known friends; recreation and amusement at which their parents are, or may be, present. Many a boy or girl has gone

wrong because there was no brightness and joy in the home. Many a prodigal today would never have been a prodigal if parents had remembered this need of innocent pleasure in their children, had provided for it, nay, had been partakers in it very frequently.

There is a certain family which has come under my observation which seems to me quite ideal in this respect. The father and mother are the friends, companions, and confidential chums of their children. They have helped thus to keep their own youth; and the children, while having other friends, think there are none such good friends and comrades as their own parents. That is ideal family life. Where such conditions exist, there will rarely be a prodigal. Had the father in this parable been such a parent I do not believe the younger son would have wasted his substance in riotous living, nor the elder son had just cause to say, "Thou never gavest me even a kid to make merry with my friends."

My hearers, we find this parable a true picture; each figure and event stand out with marvelous distinctness and great power. In every essential it is as true today as when Christ spoke it.

The chief lesson to all who hear or read that parable should come to us all: Be not satisfied

with husks—the husks of life which that prodigal found when he went out to “see life.” Millions are; are living on the husks of empty, aimless, useless, selfish lives; chasing phantoms of empty pleasure, not realizing there is real bread of life. What is that bread? Christ said He is the bread of life. And to live on bread is to live the life Christ taught.

He lives on the bread of life who first has strength of mind to believe in, and then makes his peace with, God; who determines to live as he thinks God would have him live. In the words of Roosevelt’s favorite text, the bread of life is this: “To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God.” That means to care for simple things and to do unto others as we would they do to us; to seek to develop the talents God has given us; to love home and children, and the fields and woods and starry skies; all the great, simple, splendid, beautiful things which God has so abundantly showered upon the world.

Above all true religion, deepest need of the human soul, the very deepest. He has not found the bread of life who has not been strong and wise enough to find faith in God as a loving Father. He is living on husks who has not a confident hope and trust that this life, often so short and tempestuous here, will find its full

fruition in the larger life beyond the veil which Christ so abundantly promised.

He who believes these things has found the bread of life. Seek it earnestly. Shall we not say, in the words of the Book of Life—"Lord, evermore give us this bread"?

DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER?

TEXT.—“*Make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall answer thee.*”—Job XXII, 27.

SUPPOSE that you and I are standing beside Niagara Falls, right at the brink. I move forward a step to get a better view. I stumble and am about to fall over into the seething caldron below. I cry, “Save me!” You spring forward, grasp my extended hand, draw me back, and save my life.

A miracle?

No, not if a miracle be the *breaking* of natural law. No law has been broken. One law has been overcome by another law, *stronger at that time and place.*

That illustration solves for me, forevermore, the question which has puzzled many (and used to puzzle me): how God can answer prayer and not break the laws of Nature which He has made.

Reflect: A man was in peril of falling to death. The natural law of gravity had him in

its power at that moment, and was about to cast him over the precipice. He was helpless. Death was before him. He cried to a friend, "Save me!" That cry was a prayer for help.

It was answered. A life was saved.

Yet no law of nature was broken.

The friend put forth his hand—*according* to natural law; he seized the falling man—*according* to natural law; he pulled him back and saved him—*according* to natural law.

No miracle was worked; no law of nature was broken. The force of gravity was not suspended for one second. One law of nature, gravity, was met and overcome by another law of nature at that time and place. That stronger force (the contractile force of human muscles) acted because the second man willed that it should act. The free-will of one man, in answer to a fellowman's prayer, was the cause that acted to save that fellowman.

Can God do less?

Admit there is a God, a Creator, a Father of us all, a God with free-will. Can He, and will He, do less than man, when His children cry for help? Cannot God, and will He not, put laws, known or (to us) unknown, into operation, to save those who cry to Him? If a man can do this, cannot man's Creator, God, do the same—without breaking a single law in

His universe, but by overcoming one law at a certain time and place, by another law at the same time and place? Surely it is thinkable; it seems to me most reasonable. That single illustration, I repeat, completely solves for me the whole difficulty of prayer in its relation to natural law.

How many here this morning feel, or once did feel, that prayer is a kind of confession of weakness?

Yet any such feeling is utterly wrong. For prayer means that one believes in God, a Creator who is also a loving Father, to whom we can speak as to an earthly Father. That means not weakness, but strength. It denotes belief in our own high destiny, that we are sons of God—the God who created the Universe and rules it. It links our lives with the Omnipotent.

To believe that, and that we may speak to this Creator, ennobles life infinitely. It is a childish conception to think of prayer as weakness. I say this even while confessing that I was once guilty of that weakness, but it was in my childhood, at least mentally.

Our subject is really Divine Will and Natural Law. First, as to the reasonableness of our religion, we shall quote from the late Professor John Fiske of Harvard University and Professor Tyler of Amherst, two men who are

celebrated in the realms of science and philosophy. Moreover both are evolutionists, yet both are deeply religious men and believe in a future life.

It is often asserted that science and philosophy are antagonistic to religion, yet here are two men, foremost in two of America's foremost universities, who are thoroughly religious and believe in things spiritual and unseen.

Professor Tyler's book, *The Whence and Whither of Man*, reasons us to the belief in a future world from the scientific standpoint. Professor Fiske in his book, *Through Nature to God*, does the same. Before quoting from Professor Fiske it may be noted that Darwin, father of the Evolution theory, said he considered Professor Fiske the clearest thinker on philosophy whom he (Darwin) had ever known.

Quoting from Professor Fiske's book, page 190, we read:

"So far as our knowledge of Nature goes, the whole momentum of it carries us onward to the conclusion that the Unseen World has a real existence. The lesson of Evolution is—that through all these weary ages the Human Soul has not been cherishing, in religion, a delusive phantom, but has been rising to the recognition of its kinship to the Everlasting God. *Of all the implications of the doctrine of Evolution with regard to man, I believe the very deepest and strongest to be that which asserts the everlasting Reality of Religion.*"*

*Italics mine.

Those are strong words, from one of the greatest of American philosophers; a man, remember, considered by Darwin as the clearest thinker he had ever met.

This universal instinct of religion in the human soul is no more universal than its making its wants known to God in prayer, and its belief that prayer is answered. Sir Andrew Clark, the great English physician, who stood at the head of his profession in the whole British Empire, knighted by Queen Victoria for his eminent services to humanity, said:

"Do I believe in prayer in cases of sickness? Certainly; I am persuaded that prayer is of the greatest value, and does more good than any skill of mine."

Now consider the subject of prayer in relation to natural law:

First: there are those who deny *any* value to prayer, saying it is childish and foolish and useless.

Second: there are those who admit that prayer does good, but only subjectively, on the mind and will of those who pray.

Third: there are those who believe that prayer is a help, not only to those who pray, but that God our Father hears and answers prayer objectively, when it fulfils the conditions of prayer stated by Christ.

Those who do *not* believe prayer is answered objectively, assert that this universe is a universe of law, unchanging and unchangeable; that God having made these laws and having set to work causes and effects, these cannot be changed; that it would even be wrong for God to interfere with the laws He has made.

They hold that to believe God answers prayer would imply that He is changeable, whereas it is written that there is no variable-ness nor shadow of changing with God.

What then is our answer?

A. There are higher laws in nature than we know. These *may* be brought into action in answer to prayer.

B. Man's free will is a *cause*, as in the Niagara illustration just given; a cause which does produce effects.

C. Even with the known laws of nature, man can change results in answer to a fellow-being's request, by using—not breaking—these laws, as in the Niagara illustration. *This we know*. Then cannot God do this? Is the Creator less than the creature?

D. There are higher laws which man does not know, which God may use. Our knowledge is all relative. Carlyle says, "Ice is a miracle to a South Sea Islander." Ice is a commonplace to you and me. Go to a savage in the torrid zone,

one who has never heard of cold and ice. Tell him that the water he drinks, which sparkles in the dew, sings in the rocky brook, and which floats his bark canoe—tell him this water may become hard as a stone, and can be carried about in great pieces, as we know it can in form of ice. What will he say? He will say, he *has* said, with simple frankness, "The white man lies."

Why does he say this? Because it is beyond *his* experience; it is contrary to natural law—as *he knows natural law*. So also with natives in certain arid portions of the earth, where rain never falls; when travelers have told them of water falling from the skies in torrents they have said, "The white man lies." Why? Because *they* had never seen it.

And I can well imagine that to one who had never experienced a rain storm it would seem a most improbable thing, would seem a miracle. They could ask, as we did when children, "How does the water get up there? What is it *in* before it falls? What holds it up *until* it falls? Where did it come from—if from the earth, who carried it up there?"

Again, right in the experience of most of us, such a miracle has occurred. Let us imagine ourselves back a few years. It is 1896 instead of 1928. I say to you: "Man will look through a

plank four inches thick; I will look right into a boy's body, and see his heart beat, and his ribs rise and fall as he breathes."

You would say, "Preposterous! Nonsense!"

Why? Because it was contrary to all previous experience, and the X-ray was then unknown.

Yet I have done exactly these things. I have looked into a living body and have seen the living human heart beating. One might multiply illustrations, but it is not necessary. All our knowledge of natural law is partial and incomplete. There may be (and doubtless are) natural laws yet undiscovered which will enable man to perform miracles—as we consider them now, such miracles as looking through a human body was a few years ago. Therefore when men assert that prayer cannot be answered because this universe is one of natural law, it were well for them to remember that we know very little of this natural law. God may use higher laws than we know to answer prayer, laws which He may or may not reveal to us in this life. And the cause which may set those laws in action may be man's free will in prayer. Why, man's *will* is a cause, even with the laws we know. I can pick up this book and put it down again. That is a certain effect; the book went up a foot and down again. What was the cause? You say: "A certain force in your muscles."

I reply, "Yes and no; the force in my muscles was a secondary cause; the first cause was in my *will*, telling the muscle to act."

Now if my will is a cause which can work a change thus by physical laws we know, who dares deny that God's free will may, in reply to prayer, answer by setting laws to work, not breaking them? And those laws may be known or unknown to us.

It is no reason against prayer that this universe is a universe of law. Certainly it is a universe of law. Anything else is inconceivable. But every day we see man with his free will overcoming and superseding certain natural laws by other natural laws, stronger at that time and place. What man can do, God surely can.

But you say, "If this be true, why are not more of our prayers answered?"

That is a fair question for a whole sermon, but space forbids its full discussion now.

This, however, may be said at this time. St. James wrote, "Ye ask and receive not"—why?—"because ye ask amiss." God does not promise to answer foolish nor unwise prayers, nor *any* prayer just *when* and *in the manner* we ask. Indeed, the thinking man finds one of his greatest causes of gratitude to God in that certain unwise prayers of other years were not

answered as he then desired. In the highest sense they *were* answered—for God gave what was best. But we do not always know what is best for us, any more than a little child knows. Personally I feel that if I sang *Te Deums* all the rest of my life I could not sufficiently praise God that one of the chief prayers of my youth was not answered. God is working His purpose out, in *His* way, and *His* time, not ours. He answers our prayer best sometimes by not granting our unwise petitions, or not granting them at the time and in the way we ask.

Now if one can understand that much, and thank God that certain of his prayers were not answered *as he then wanted them*, what will it be when we see in the eternal light of God; when we see, not through a glass darkly, but face to face; and know, not in part, but even also as we are known? Then we will praise God with all our heart and soul and being that certain of our unwise prayers were not answered—as we then desired.

Another question often asked: Does prayer change God? Is it possible for us to alter the plans and purposes of the Almighty by our petitions? In reply, Yes and no. Do not think this an evasion but note what follows:

God is unchangeable and without a shadow of turning, in willing for man, always, that

which is best. But man's free will may frustrate that best which God would have him receive. We cannot at this time discuss the subject of frustrating God. It is a great mystery, but is mentioned distinctly by St. Paul in Galatians 2:21. This much may be said here: the power of man to frustrate God's will is a consequence of man's real free will, given to man by God. And God gave this free will because He wants man's love and worship freely, not by compulsion.

Now when a man really and rightly makes petition to God, it means that that man's will no longer frustrates, or stands in the way of, God's will, but endeavors to unite with it and be in accord with it. Man says, must say, "If it be Thy will." Then a wonderful change comes. The change comes not in God, but in that man's will. It is always God's will to do what is best for man; but until man's will submits, until man says and means "Thy will be done," as he must in prayer, God's will and grace are frustrated.

To illustrate: I once lived in a house with a very dark dining room, particularly in the morning. It had no sunlight. I am very fond of a bright, cheerful, sunny breakfast room. It seems to start the whole day right. Now from the construction of the house it seemed impos-

sible to get an east window to let in the morning sun. A heavy chimney was in the way. Plan after plan was suggested. Friends came; one said to do it this way, another that way, and another said it couldn't be done at all. At last one said, "There is only one way to accomplish this: use another flue and cut right through that chimney over the fireplace, brick and all; it is difficult, but it can be done."

Well, it *was* done, and it transformed the room. Dark and dismal before, it is bright and sunny now. Plants which before would not grow there now blossom freely and nod to the sun in the summer morning breezes. Certain defects in the room which were not before apparent, were brought out in distinct relief by the greater light, and were effaced. The room had to be renovated. How was all this accomplished? All by the sunlight, the glorious, health-giving sunlight being admitted into that room.

But there was no change in the *sun*. For years it had been shining down on the outside of that dark and dismal room; for years the sunshine had been trying to get in and transform it, to give light and good cheer, and by its health-giving rays to make the beautiful plants grow and thrive; for years the light had tried to reveal the defects and dusty corners. But the dark,

heavy wall shut out the sun. When once that wall was pierced, and the sun given a chance, it flooded in and transformed the room. It was a different room, yet the same. It changed, not because the sun had changed, but because the room was changed, and a chance was given for the sunlight to get in, that sunlight which for a score of years had been trying to get in.

So prayer may bring changes into human lives; not because God changes, but because the soul opens up its windows to God and His glorious light shines in. God was always willing to give that light, always waiting to transform that soul; but God (I mean it reverently), God *could* not until that soul opened its windows toward the Sun of righteousness. Man's stubborn free will had walled up the soul more impenetrably than brick and stone. But when man's same free will opened up the soul toward God and bid His glorious sun to shine in, then that sun, always waiting, came into that soul and transformed it.

Note the further completeness of the analogy: After the light of God came into that soul, blemishes of character were seen which were unnoted before, and when seen might be overcome by God's grace. Where before the beautiful flowers of Christian virtues would not grow, they now grow abundantly, because

the sunshine, which is their life, was pouring into that soul. The Sun of Righteousness, which is Christ, had arisen in that life to give it light evermore—unless indifference, carelessness, or evil again built up a wall of separation between that soul and its God. That life was renovated simply and solely because the light of God came in. In all reverence be it said, but it was impossible for even God Almighty to enter and heal and bless until man's stubborn will opened the way.

How beautiful and complete that truth! Your prayers may be answered and your lives changed and transformed, not because *God* changes but because *you* change; your life may open toward God and give His grace, which is always waiting, an opportunity to do its mighty and healing work for you. In a word: prayer breaks down the wall of separation between man and God. That tells it all. Prayer breaks down the wall of separation between man and God.

These, then, seem to me reasonable conclusions in regard to prayer and natural law:

1st. This universe is a universe of law; but God created and is immanent in all those laws.

2nd. There may be and are laws which are higher than man's understanding. God may use

these laws, not breaking any other law, in answer to prayer.

3rd. Even with known laws in the natural world, a man with his free will can set one law in motion to overcome another law at that time and place (not to break it) as in the Niagara illustration. If man can do this, may not God much more do it? It is absurd to assert that God cannot answer prayer because of natural laws, when men, His creatures, are answering requests and prayers of their friends every day by using natural laws, not breaking them.

4th and last, God's unchangeableness and will are not affected by His answer to prayer. God's unchangeable will is always to give us bread—or what is best. He is always waiting, as the sunlight is waiting outside the darkened room. It is man's soul that changes in its relation to God when it opens its windows to Him in prayer. As a result that life is changed, often marvelously changed, because God's grace is no longer frustrated but has opportunity to do its perfect work. I have seen this many times, have seen men so changed by allowing God to enter their lives that they were different persons, new creatures, made so by the constraining power of Christ.

Therefore, Christians, be not afraid to pray. I here confess that in other years it seemed to

me a weakness, even unmanly, to pray, as I think it does to many. But it is *not* weakness. It is manly strength and power. Prayer is speech to God your Maker who loves you everlastingly. It is praise and gratitude, as well as petition. What nobler, manlier thing can a human creature do than have speech with his Creator, his Father, his God, who made him and all things? It is utterly foolish to look upon talking with our Creator as weakness. It is strength. It betokens man's sonship to a King, the King who sits on the Throne of the Universe. To believe that, and feel that you can talk with this King as with a human father, gives a dignity to man that nothing else in the universe can give—absolutely nothing else.

Be not frightened out of making your petitions to your Father because some man who thinks himself extremely wise tells you God cannot answer because of natural law—if indeed there be a God. That little egotist, man, wise in his own conceit, worshipping his own puny intellect, knows nothing about it, no more than a little child, nor so much. The innocent child, untainted by sin or egotism, simply and naturally talks with its Heavenly Father.

And on the other hand remember that in this discourse I have quoted to you great scientists who do believe these things.

When one tells you God cannot answer prayer because this is a universe of law, then reply, or at least think (for it's often not worth while to reply): God who made this universe must be greater than the laws He has made. He *could* suspend or change them if He willed. But He need not. If man can answer a fellow-man's cry for help by putting into action other laws stronger at that time and place, much more can the God who made heaven and earth do so.

Brethren, make your petitions known to your Creator. Do it without fear, or foolish shame, that it is weak. It is a fine, and strong, and manly thing to do. Don't be afraid to believe He is your Father, who, as Holy Writ tells us, "careth for you." Say the great "Our Father" Christ taught, at the beginning of every day. Don't be ashamed as you go to rest to say the "Now I lay me" you learned at your mother's knee (which Roosevelt said daily), and the "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," which Christ said on the cross. And during the day, in the moment of perplexity or temptation or danger, send up from your soul the sentence petition which a certain Church father called "arrow prayers"—for guidance in perplexity, strength in temptation, deliverance in danger. Don't forget intercessions for

others, for those in need or sorrow, by name if you know them, or the arrow-like intercession for the sorrowing ones you meet, even if unknown to you, but whose tragic faces tell the story of suffering.

In a word, "*practise* the presence of God," as Bishop Brent says. Try to feel Him ever near. Keep your spirit in the atmosphere of converse with your all-merciful Father, even as we read that Moses talked with God as with a friend. Thus keep the windows of the soul open toward Jerusalem, and let the sunshine of God's presence into your life. Thus shall you find strength; thus shall you find peace; thus shall you feel about you, and beneath you, and enfolding you, the everlasting arms of Him who hath loved you with an everlasting love, and does even now.

Not a sparrow falls but God knows.

He who cares for the sparrows—"careth for you."

YE ASK AMISS

AS A PREFACE, I ask your attention to a very brief analysis of the Lord's Prayer, which Christ gave by request of His disciples. It is the perfect model.

1st. It begins "Our Father who art in heaven." "Our"—not "my" Father. That means that all men have one Father, that we are brethren, and that any good we ask for self, we should ask for all.

2nd. "Hallowed be Thy name." Thus we should give praise and gratitude and thanks to God for all past blessings, this before we ask for anything.

3rd. "Thy kingdom come." This is the first petition, and asks, not only for self, but for others, all the blessings of Christianity. It is a prayer for missions, that Christ's salvation come to all men, which means all blessings for all—not self.

4th. "Thy will be done." Herein we ask that God's will prevail in the world, and also in

our lives. It stands like a sentinel before every prayer. It says to God, "All I ask for I ask only if it be Thy will. Thy will is wiser than mine, for Thou art Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, while I am finite."

5th. "Give *us* this day our daily bread." Note the "*us*"—not "*me*." We pray for all men, not only for self. And we ask—what? *Bread*. Not only physical bread, but all we need physically and spiritually. When we ask for bread, that means, legitimately, that if anything we ask is *not* bread, we do not desire it, believing God knows best.

6th. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Thus we condition God's forgiveness to us on our forgiveness of others. That needs no further comment.

7th. "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen." This is simply a fitting ascription, closing the prayer. It is not in the most ancient manuscripts, and is not considered by scholars as a part of the original words Christ uttered, but as probably having been added by some copyist in a moment of religious exaltation. That is why we do not use these closing words of the Lord's Prayer in certain parts of our liturgy; though they are beautiful and fitting, and there is no reason for not using them when we wish.

This is a very brief exposition of the greatest prayer ever said. Many whole volumes have been written upon it, which shows how condensed this short interpretation is.

This short explanation is given for better understanding of the one perfect model of prayer, before beginning my discourse on the theme, "Why is Prayer Sometimes Unanswered?"

TEXT.—"*Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.*"—St. James IV, 3.

There is in the city of Paris a convent, within which, lying flat on their faces upon a stone floor, women are praying for the sins of the world. Their arms are extended in such a manner that each body forms a cross. Lying there in the rough garments of the sisterhood they are praying night and day. When one group of sisters is exhausted another group relieves them; and they in turn are relieved by others. Their unceasing prayers have ascended thus for years, for centuries, even as at this moment.

The seasons come and go. Spring, with its freshness and fragrance and blossoms, passes into the full-blown beauty of summer—still they are praying there. The harvest moon comes, the fruits of the earth bend low the orchard trees, the vineyards are purple, the

barns are full, and autumn paints the landscape with red and gold—still they are praying there. Then winter; the north wind blows, valley and hill are wrapped in a mantle of snow, the streams and lakes are locked by frost and ice, and all the world of nature seems dead (though it is only sleeping)—and still they are praying.

Years pass, youth becomes age, the sisters of a generation past are gone and others have taken their places; still those prostrate forms are lying there praying for the sins of the world—as they have prayed without ceasing since the sisterhood was formed.

I do not know how it may impress you, my friends, but to me it is solemn and touching. Nor can I think of it without a kindlier feeling to that great Roman Church which, little as we can agree with it in many things, still can teach much to the Reformed and Protestant Churches in the sublime reality of its faith and the hold of that faith upon its members.

There is much evil in that city of Paris, as in all the world. Men are stealing, blaspheming, killing, breaking every law of God and man; but as the Eternal Father looks upon it all, there ascends the incense of unceasing prayer from that wicked city; it comes from these women praying night and day

throughout the centuries for the sins of the world.

If this thought is touching, the thought of human prayers ascending night and day for the sins of the world, much more should it touch us and inspire us to better lives when we think of that One at the right hand of God, interceding for us now and evermore, as we read in Romans 8:34. That One walked the earth in human flesh, and felt all of human sorrow and pain as you and I feel it; that One, nailed to the cross by wicked men, prayed for His murderers; that One crucified afresh every day by the indifference and sins of His professed followers, still prays as He did on the cross, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Many have said to me, "I have prayed for years for a certain thing, and my prayer is not answered."

Not long ago, in personal conversation with a Christian business man, I quoted the words, "Cast your care upon Him for He careth for you."

To which this very practical man replied, with a tinge of irony in his voice: "Don't you ever find it difficult to cast your care upon Him?"

"I do," I replied, "but I find it far more difficult *not* to do so. It is simply the difference between trying to carry the burden alone (which is difficult) and trying to carry it with faith in God's help, which is also difficult but less so than carrying the burden in one's own strength." It is in order to try to make these difficulties less to earnest Christians that this discourse is written.

Many prayers seem to be unanswered. Why? Did not Christ say, "If ye ask anything in My name," it shall be granted? Assuredly He did. But we must remember that when Christ said those words He meant "anything" under the conditions as shown in the Lord's Prayer which He gave as a model. Remember that He spoke on the subject of Prayer at other times and places than when He said "Ask anything." We have no right to detach one of Christ's sayings from the whole body of His teachings. We must consider them together and as related to each other.

Prayer is unanswered:

1st. Because of lack of faith.

2nd. Because we "ask amiss."

3rd. Because we do not do our part.

4th. Prayer may yet be answered, though it has not been today; God has plenty of time, and may yet reveal to us why it was not best

our prayer be answered just when, and as we think it should. This has been the writer's experience repeatedly.

5th. God may answer, or have answered, our prayers in another and better way than we have expected.

A. Lack of Faith:

There is the story of a good New England woman who was much annoyed by a certain hill near her home which obstructed her view. She read in her Bible one day that the prayer of faith would remove mountains, and said to herself, "If faith will remove mountains, surely it will remove this little hill."

So she prayed very earnestly one night that God would remove that little hill. Then she laid down and slept. With the first morning light she awoke, ran to the window to look, saw the hill unremoved, and exclaimed, "There, I knew it wouldn't be gone!"

Is that not really like much of our faith? We really do not expect many of our prayers to be answered. Indeed we would be surprised if they were answered. We must have faith that God will answer our prayers in *His* time, not ours—and *His* way, not ours—and if they are according to *His* will and knowledge of what is best. For our wisdom is finite, His infinite.

B. Prayer is unanswered because Christians often ask amiss:

They ask God to do things which are trivial, or things they can do for themselves; or perhaps ask for that which is not best. A little child may ask its father for berries which the father knows are poison. The father refuses. Why? Because he loves the child. His refusal is really an answer. When Christians pray they should ask God to direct their prayers that they may not ask amiss. If, for example, Christians pray for success, or a recovery from sickness, or the conversion of a dear one—no matter what, if they always include in their petition “if it be Thy will,” and “in Thine own good time,” and “if it be best for me and for others,” then they will less often ask amiss; then they will less often be troubled because of unanswered prayer. St. James must have meant this when he wrote in the words of our text, “Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.”

C. Prayer is often unanswered because we do not do our part:

God will never do for you what you can do for yourself. Never forget that.

A wise father will not do for a child what it can do for itself. He will insist that the child earn a coveted plaything if the child is able to

do so, except of course on occasions like Christmas, etc. So God requires that we do what we can to answer our own prayers.

I have heard of a certain Unitarian minister who frankly said that he prayed *to* his congregation, merely for the subjective effect it would have on their minds—which effect he believed would work out in their lives. I was asked if I believed in that theory of prayer. I do—and—I believe much more. First I believe earnest prayer has great power subjectively on the mind and will of him who prays, that that is one of God's *ways* of answering prayer. But I believe further that God answers prayer also objectively, apart from the mind and will of him who prays. I believe God answers prayers by using, not breaking, His laws—known or unknown to us.

But remember, God helps only those who help themselves. Christ said to "Work" as well as "Pray." We have no right to expect God's help when we do not try to accomplish results ourselves. That is one of the greatest causes of unanswered prayers. God requires that we do our part.

A somewhat amusing story illustrates this. A certain little girl was much grieved that her brother had set a trap for the birds. She tried vainly to persuade him not to do so. Finally

one day she said with radiant face, "You won't catch any birds, because I have prayed God not to let them get caught."

"How do you know God will answer your prayer?" asked the brother.

"I know," answered the little Christian, "I'm sure God won't let the trap catch any birds."

"But *how* do you know? What makes you so sure?" he replied.

"Because," said the little miss, with the fire of battle in her eye, "I prayed God not to let you catch any birds, and then—I went out and kicked the trap all to pieces."

Seriously, that is one way to get our prayers answered. Work. "Kick the trap all to pieces"—for one thing the traps set to entice our children into evil ways for the money gain vile men may coin out of their destruction. Men may pray against the awful curse of drunkenness, but we need also to kick the trap all to pieces, to destroy that fearful blight, the liquor traffic, and never give up the battle. Christians must work as well as pray. God expects them to work. He put us in this world to learn to work, and to develop our wills and character by doing things. He has promised to answer our prayers when we do our part and when we do not ask amiss. But we do often ask amiss; and we do ask in vain when we fail to work,

or do all in our power to help answer our own prayers.

D. Many of our unanswered prayers to-day may yet be answered in the future. Remember, God has plenty of time. We grow impatient. Seeing and knowing so little of this complex web of life we still think our prayers should be answered immediately, and in exactly our own way, instead of in God's own time and way. Remember the play is not yet finished; the drama of human life, and of our individual lives, is still in process. God has many other results to accomplish besides those we desire, results which we cannot imagine and which may be one cause our prayers are not yet answered. But it may be only "not yet." Tomorrow, next year, ten years hence, that thing for which you have so long prayed may come to pass. It may be in your way or in some other way which to the wisdom of God appears better. One of the most magnificent sentences in all scripture is this: "God is strong and patient." Let us learn to be strong and patient—strong in faith, patient in awaiting answer to prayer in God's own time and way.

Finally, I believe that if some of our prayers remain always unanswered God will some day reveal to us why, and show that in the highest

sense they were answered in love. He will show us how we asked amiss, or asked for things not bread. Such has been my own experience many times. It has also been the experience of others, deeply spiritual Christians, who have spoken to me of these higher things of life. They have told me their gratitude to God is boundless because He did not grant certain unwise prayers. Now they see clearly that it would not have been best—not bread. Can you not see that He *did* answer them? In a higher, better, and the truest sense, God answered their prayers, answered in refusing their unwise petitions, answered and gave bread when they ignorantly asked that which would not have been bread—for them.

So, brethren, God will do for every earnest Christian who sincerely works and prays with faith. He will give them bread, He will answer their prayer in His own time and way; or He will yet reveal to them that they have not asked for bread—that they asked for a stone, thinking they were asking for bread.

An infidel once said to me: "Do you really believe the Creator of this mighty universe (if there be a Creator) answers or even hears the prayers of so insignificant a creature as man, a mere insect, dwelling on a globe that is as a grain of sand in the infinite universe of count-

less suns and worlds? Does it not seem absurd to believe such a thing?"

That is a fair question.

Think of the other myriads of worlds in space brought to our knowledge by the science of astronomy. These worlds quite possibly may be inhabited by beings like ourselves, or even superior. Then consider that this mighty power we call God created and governs them all. Is it reasonable to suppose that this mighty Being, the Infinite Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of all, will listen to the prayers of minute beings like us, on this little planet which is a mere speck of dust in comparison to the mighty universe about us?

Such questions come to all. I have read them the last year in a book, *Guesses at the Riddle of Existence*, by that accomplished writer and sceptic, Professor Goldwin Smith.

Yet this question reveals a strange misconception as to what is true greatness. Our answer is this: Greatness is not mere physical bigness.

What has physical size to do with it?

Would those who ask this question think that if our earth were a score, a million times as big as it is, it would give us any more claim to the Creator's care and love? Is mere size the test of importance? If so, the elephant is more worthy of God's love and care than man. If

so, the mother would love her biggest child the most.

What nonsense! True greatness consists not in size. This is a complete answer. The greatness of God consists in this, not only that He sustains the planets in their orbits, and holds the bands of Orion in His hands, but also that His infinite love and care is over all the Universe, has numbered the hairs of our heads, and watches even the sparrow's fall.

Look not only through the telescope but also through the microscope. The telescope reveals to us the wonders of the heavens above; the microscope reveals the marvels of the world in a drop of water. A stagnant pool by the wayside is a whole universe of life and being. There are creatures which are born, live, reproduce, and die of old age in an hour. There are creatures so small that thousands could inhabit one drop of water. These creatures are as perfect as you and I in physical mechanism, but infinitely little in size. In a museum I have seen shells as small as pin heads. They look like white specks mounted on a background of black. My guide gave me a glass and told me to look. Magnified, they were of infinite beauty; lace-like, delicate tracings were all over them, invisible to the naked eye. Holy Writ says, "The heavens declare the glory of God." These

beautiful microscopic shells declare the glory of God quite as much, in their marvelous beauty and infinite perfection.

Bigness! Mere bigness, greatness? Never!

True greatness is this; not that God watches merely over the big things in His universe, but that His loving care is over all that He has made, even this world of the infinitely little.

Therefore, it is no hindrance to belief in prayer that this planet we live on is a very insignificant and small one. God does not look at mere physical bigness as the test of His interest in His creation. All that He has made is equally under His loving care, whether big or little. If God created you and has planted this instinct of prayer in your soul, He will hear that prayer which His creative power has made one of your deepest instincts, and answer as and when and in the manner it seemeth best to Him—and is therefore best for you.

Let me tell you what is true greatness. It is written of man that God breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living soul, an immortal. That is true greatness, that God has made one on this planet in the image of Himself, with a free will and an immortal spirit. Had He breathed this same spirit into the smallest of the infusoria that we tread under foot, that creature would be the greatest,

though the smallest in physical size. It is man's *soul* that makes his greatness, and that greatness would be of just the same value in the sight of his Maker whether he lived in a body as small as a tadpole or as big as an elephant; whether the world he lived on were as small as one of Saturn's moons or as big as the great planet Neptune.

Of all the arguments against prayer, or indeed the Christian religion, this appears to me the most pitifully absurd and trivial—that God (if there be a God) cannot, or will not, answer man's petitions because, forsooth, man lives on too little a world, and is himself too small.

And further, we should remember that God may yet answer our as yet unanswered prayers, in another and better way than ours. Or if, in His wisdom, He does not answer them just as and when we think He should, then trust that in *His* time and way He will yet answer, or reveal to us that it is not best, and why.

We read a significant sentence in Holy Writ, concerning St. Paul. It is this: "Behold, he prayeth!"

Why significant? Because St. Paul had persecuted the Christian Church. He had witnessed St. Stephen's death and held the clothing of those who stoned this first Christian martyr. He had started to Damascus, "breath-

ing out threatenings and slaughter" against them.

Then, something happened.

Saul of Tarsus, who had left Jerusalem to kill Christians, entered Damascus a Christian himself. For he had seen the Vision. Then we read, "Behold, he prayeth."

It's a great thing when this can be said, truly, of any man. For it means that man is no longer living in His own strength, but believes in God; in God as a loving Father who hears and answers the petitions of His children.

Brethren, I have confessed that once I thought prayer a weakness. No longer do I think so. Prayer is strength, and a source of more strength. In Holy Writ we read that the prayer of the righteous availeth much. By prayer we link our lives to our Creator, King of the Universe, and also our loving Father.

Be not ashamed to pray.

Be not too faithless to pray.

Believe your petitions are heard, and if true prayer, will be answered in God's own time and way. Thus shall you find peace, joy, and strength in your day of need.

COVET THE BEST GIFTS

AN ASH WEDNESDAY DISCOURSE

LENT is the time appointed by the Church for intensive cultivation of the spiritual life.

It is a wise provision, despite the criticisms of it you both see and hear on the part of the worldly, the self-indulgent, and the foolish.

It is a sort of spiritual stock-taking, or inventory. It is a season when Christians (who care) endeavor earnestly to attain a finer and better life henceforth. It is well worth while, though in our Lenten practices we should beware lest we make resolves lightly and then forget all about them.

We read in Holy Writ of the man who beholds his likeness in a mirror and then straightway forgets what manner of man he is. That describes a real type, a type too frequent among Christians. Psychologists tell us it is better *no* resolves than to make them superficially—and

then forget them. That makes for weakness, not strength.

TEXT.—“*Covet earnestly the best gifts.*”—1 Cor. XII, 31.

Now here is a contradiction.

Sceptics say the Bible often contradicts itself.

Yes, the Bible is an extremely contradictory Book—if we do not go beneath the surface. The Bible tells us also that we must not hate, that our life, and the atmosphere we create about us, must be one of love. Yet there are some things we know we ought to hate. Christ hated certain things, not people. He hated hypocrisy, lying, false weights, malice, slander, taking advantage of the man in our power, evil in all its forms.

Whether we hate or not depends altogether on what the object is. Personally I admire a good hater—if and *when* he hates things, not people, and hates the things that ought to be hated.

Likewise Christians are forbidden to covet. It is forbidden to covet anything that is our neighbor's; that is, it is wrong to wish we possessed it to his deprivation. It is not wrong, nor is it forbidden by the tenth commandment, to desire to have things *similar* to those of our neighbors—reasonable things, such as houses,

books, pictures, and the like. Indeed it is commendable for a man to desire to better his worldly condition, provided he puts the first things first and does not become a slave to worldly conditions and ambitions, rather than their master. Therefore it is right to desire, or covet, good things—really good, and splendid, and fine things. St. Paul advises it in our text when he writes the words, "Covet earnestly the best gifts."

Let us ask ourselves: "What is my greatest desire in this world?" If it were in the power of some good fairy (as we used to read in childhood) to give to any of us, say, three gifts—anything we might ask, what do you suppose five out of six would ask?

Let us be honest with ourselves. What do we really want in our lives most earnestly? What things do men generally desire most supremely? Would you say, for example, Character, Religion, and Wisdom?

Do most men covet things like these above all else—a strong symmetrical character, a genuine religious life, a mind stored with wisdom?

Possibly we say, "*I* really desire these things above all else." *Do* we? Do we covet such things in all sincerity?

Here is the simple test. If we desire these things above all else, then how much time and

thought do we give to attaining them? How earnestly have we sought them? How much thought did you and I give the week past to building a better and stronger character? How much thought do we habitually give to the deeper things, to religion and God? How much effort do we give to attaining wisdom, true wisdom? Not man's wisdom merely, valuable as it may be, but wisdom such as Solomon desired when, in answer to his supreme prayer, God gave him not only what he asked for, but also riches and honor?

How many of us have spent much time, or thought, or effort during the past week or past year in endeavoring to attain these best gifts? (Note that the speaker includes himself in this inquiry.)

On the other hand, what *have* we been seeking, mostly, during the past weeks and months and years of our lives? What things have we earnestly striven for? What do nine men out of ten strive for most in this world? I venture to assert, and believe your honest opinion will bear me out, that the vast majority crave as the three best gifts of life, not character, religion, and wisdom, but, judging as we must by their actions, men covet most, wealth, health, and popularity.

Is that not the truth, in all sincerity?

Take money. What a power it is. You think you will never need to worry much about the future if you have money. True, there is One who said to those that trusted in Him: "Take no thought for the morrow." Undoubtedly Christ meant Take no *anxious* thought, no *worrying* thought for the morrow; not to take no thought at all. God does not tell us to be improvident. He has given us faculties of brain and judgment and certainly expects us to use them. "But then," men have said to me, "you have never seen God, and we *have* seen money, and its power. And it's so pleasant never to have to worry about tomorrow's needs. It is true God said He would care for His people, but would you not rather have good government bonds, interest payable in gold?"

Isn't that the real attitude of mind of the great majority?

We see money's power. Men tell you it buys friends.

It will not, but only something which masquerades as friends.

Others say: "It will buy comfort, and travel, and good things to eat." That is certainly true, and many seem to live for these alone.

Others tell us: "Money will buy respect." Never—only what *seems* to be respect.

Money will buy only pseudo-respect. It will

buy attention from hired servants, who hasten to supply our wants and pay an obsequious deference very flattering to our vanity. Many seem to value such bought deference, which depends strictly on the size of our tips. All these things money will buy, and many seem to care for them.

But it also writes anxious lines about the eye and on the brow. It often (not always) makes the heart hard and suspicious. Frequently it shrivels and blasts the natural affections. It has been known to cause children to desert aged parents who bore and nurtured them, and—as most of us have seen not seldom—has made brothers and sisters seem to hate instead of love each other, especially when an estate is divided.

Is not all this absolute truth?

Yet money *may* be a mighty power for good. It is not money that is the root of all evil, as many incorrectly quote. But the *love* of money, St. Paul says, is the root of much—not all—evil.

Consider next—popularity.

Next to wealth most people seem to strive for popularity. Yet if you know a person tries to be popular, how hard it is not to despise him. One said to me concerning a certain clergyman: “Rev. Mr. X is so displeasing to me, he tries

so hard to be popular." There is nothing more irritating to any sincere and earnest clergyman than for some well-intentioned person to say (as they do sometimes), "If you do thus and so you will be popular, and will fill our church." One might as well say, "I know you are trying to be a man-pleaser." It's very hard to be civil to people who say such things to you, even though they mean to be kind.

Still it may be admitted that it's delightful to feel that you are generally liked, that you have the respect and confidence of men. But money can't buy this. It can buy a sham deference, and a certain kind of popularity. It can buy fawning sycophants, if one cares for such. But it takes character and winning qualities to buy lasting esteem. Those who strive greatly for it will not often win it—at least not permanently. It must come from a genuinely kind and sympathetic heart; no pretense can long avail to hide the real man or woman. As Lincoln said: "You can fool all the people some of the time, and some all the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time."

And then, health!

What is money or popularity without health?

Money cannot buy that either. It can buy you better care, and softer beds; but disease is no respecter of persons. The rich man groans

with his gout just as much as the poor man with his rheumatism. Many a rich woman would part with her all—or at least half her money—for her cook's constitution, or her chambermaid's figure and complexion. And it is more than likely that her lack in these respects is the result of her own life of self-indulgence, her unwholesome food, late hours, and, in plain words, the laziness which is often the result of wealth.

Health, like all God's greatest gifts, is within reach of practically all who will simply fulfil conditions and live according to Nature's well-known laws, which are also God's laws. Health is certainly a great possession and none should be condemned for desiring it, for coveting it.

But St. Paul writes, "Covet earnestly the *best* gifts."

What are they?

Certainly not these things just mentioned, and which we know most men covet most.

You and I want the really *best* in the highest sense. That is natural. That is right. God has so constituted us that we desire the best things in life. Our mistake is usually our own judgment in regard to what the best gifts are. And many, the majority, seem contented with that which is not bread, and covet the things which

are temporal instead of the things which are eternal.

In the words of another, "How can we make life yield its fullest and best gifts? What is the real secret of a contented and well-rounded life?"

Here we are, living, conscious creatures on this earth whirling in its orbit through the universe, supported on nothing man can see. We know our years are but three score and ten—a bit more or less, perhaps. How, therefore, can we make the most of these years? How fill them fullest of satisfaction that is rich and abiding, a satisfaction that increases as the years pass by and never diminishes, a satisfaction that gives to life interest, hope, beauty, peace; a life which never wearies?

That is a legitimate question. We all ask it sometimes. Millions of hungering souls are asking it today. Millions unborn will ask it. It is the old question of the philosophers, after all. What is the *summum bonum* of life, or, in plain English, rather than Latin, what is the supreme good of life?

And there *is* an answer.

How many of us have found it?

Is life rich, and full, and sweet to us? Would we have it so? Then listen; there is one simple, practical principle Christ gave, which,

if laid hold of and made the central principle of one's life, around which all others properly group and subordinate themselves, will make life truly rich, and give to us the highest and best success. It will be that best gift St. Paul tells us in our text to covet earnestly. It will even make life splendid. It will make any life genuinely joyous just in proportion as it becomes a vital part of it. If this great principle were lived up to it would transform this sorrowing and sinful world in a day. No longer would "man's inhumanity to man make countless thousands mourn." It would bring to the shallow society woman, spending nights and days seeking only her own pleasure, such a flood of genuine satisfaction and happiness that it would make the husk she has called pleasure seem a pitiful, paltry thing. This principle would make her look upon the poor woman who scrubs her floor or cooks her food as *really* her sister because a child of the same Father; and possibly a sweeter spirit and much finer in character in God's sight. She would look upon her not merely as a theoretical sister—on Sundays when in church—but a sister on Mondays, and Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and Fridays, and Saturdays as well.

Think a moment of the countless millions of dreary lives that seem hardly worth while

to those who live them; lives like those among whom much of my life has been spent. Most of their waking hours, most of their days, most of their years, are spent within the four walls of a mill, with all about them the constant jar and rumble of ponderous machinery. Such lives are plodding, uninteresting, gray, monotonous; yet they might be made richer and sweeter if only they, and we, all coveted and sought and clung to this supreme gift, this transforming life principle.

Do you ask what it is? It is not new in words; it is old, but untried by so many of us.

The idea has always dominated the world, and still prevails largely, that *self* is the supreme concern of every man. The world tells you that if one would find success, greatness, happiness, he must care for self, and self alone. This gross world-spirit says: "Always look out for Number One. Love self, serve self, care only for self, for if you don't, nobody else will."

Brethren, that is the devil's doctrine, the great mistake, the fatal error, the deadly heresy which has destroyed the happiness of millions, and makes every life a real failure until the error is cast off.

Self, selfishness—the love of self—is the root of all sin.

You cannot find a sin, or think of one which has been since the world began, which is not rooted in selfishness in some form or other.

And that is opposite the immutable, eternal law Christ gave and some have proved, that we *find* our true self only in *losing* self in the service of others. Living the unselfish life is the only way to find true and lasting happiness. That may sound trite but it is everlastingly true. To covet that is to covet the best there is in all the drama of existence in this or any other world.

At once men say, "Oh, that! We've heard all that before. That's an old story."

Certainly it is; we've all heard it often. It's an old story, old as the hills, old as the love of God, which is ageless and gave the Christ who gave Himself for others—for you and for me.

But, do we live it?

It would be new to us (and possibly a great surprise to our neighbors) if we *lived* it, and acted it out in our lives this coming week and year. It is not a new truth: that may be admitted. God's truth is all old, but ever new. We seek to present old truth as forcibly as may be, in new ways, and, by God's grace, with more power; that that old truth, that ageless and therefore ever new truth, may transform some life or lives, and our own lives also.

Covet earnestly the *best* gift? What is it?

It is, as we see, a paradox.

It is a crucifixion.

It is the crucifixion of Self.

And behold! A resurrection; a new Self!

Christ said it. He said, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." That is what He wants. Christ tells us that he who kills the self-life, who crucifies self, finds a new life, richer, fuller, sweeter, even the divine life. And it lasts. Furthermore, it's the only happiness that will last.

Can we not see the profound significance of Christ's crucifixion? It was losing self for others. What followed? A resurrection—to a new life, more abundant, richer, eternal. Such a resurrection always follows such a crucifixion.

Why not try it? Take Christ at His word. You may know some who have. If you do you must look at their lives with awe and reverence.

First, let it sink deep into our consciousness that our happiness is no more important than anyone's else. That thought will transform any life. Live for that a day, a week, a month. *Seek to help every soul who comes into your life*, every life that touches yours. Use tact; don't preach at people; they won't be preached at. You wouldn't.

Every day certain lives touch yours—the

lives of your family, the lives of your maid or your mistress, your employer or your men, your friends and business associates. A certain definite number come in contact with you today, will tomorrow, and as long as you live. Make it your rule; make it *your business* (as though you were paid for it) that every one leaves your presence feeling just a little happier or stronger than when he came.

Try it. A generous act, a kind word, even the intonation of your voice—very slight things they are, but they will make those who know you thank God there is such a man or woman in the world. Make them believe in God the more because of you. We know there are such people—why not you and I? What better, what greater, what supremest gift can we covet more than that?

If we try this we may often forget. People *do* forget. All of us do. What then? Try again. It's not forgetting, but not trying again that spells failure. When you have forgotten, ask God to help you next time—that silent, voiceless prayer, only a thought sent from your soul to God, but He understands and will answer.

By coveting such a life above all things we are coveting the very best thing conceivable. By crucifying self we arise in a new resurrection

to the nobler self, the life we find in the new self which sprang from the tomb of the old buried self—the selfish self. This is the *sum-mum bonum*, this the best of the gifts St. Paul tells us to covet, this the principle which can and will transform our lives, and will transform this world, so much in need of transforming.

AND THIS IN ONE WORD IS CHRISTIANITY. Nothing else, nothing less.

Some years ago I read an article about queer epitaphs engraved on old English tombstones. One caught my attention particularly, and awoke my admiration. Carved on the stone were the usual name, date of birth, and death; then for epitaph the simple words:

“She was so pleasant.”

That is a great epitaph. It told of a sweet and kindly nature. None but a good woman could deserve such a comment passed upon her life as its outstanding trait: “She was so pleasant.” Going through this world she had scattered sunshine.

Let us covet a character which may deserve such an epitaph this coming year, all the years. Then we may feel with St. Paul that we are coveting earnestly the best things in life.

Here is a perfect illustration of this truth, from the science of Astronomy:

Do you know that for hundreds of years, until the time of Copernicus, all men believed the *earth* the center of the universe? With what result? Chaos and confusion. Learned men of those ages did their best to understand, to find some regularity and system in the motions of the stars.

But they failed, and could not do otherwise, when the foundation of all their reasoning was wrong. Then came the mighty genius Copernicus, and said, "No, not the earth, but the sun is the center." Of course he was ridiculed. New truth is always ridiculed by the mob, and the bringer of new truth is often crucified, as was He who was the Truth, the Christ.

Yet Copernicus was right, as every school-boy knows today; and men of science, building their theory on the sun—not the earth—as the center, developed the noble science of astronomy: a science that can foretell an eclipse years ahead to the second; a science which can locate and weigh a planet in the depths of space before a human eye has ever seen it—as they did with Neptune, that giant planet on the very frontier of our solar system, so far it is invisible to the naked eye.

Thus in our little lives: if we would make them as Christ would have us, we must find the true center, and that is not self, but God.

Then will we perceive at once that in His sight every life is as important as yours and mine, every person in this world as truly loved by Him, every one possessing the inherent right to happiness quite as much as you and I.

When we once realize that, it is the death blow to selfishness. Then we see that not selfishness but *selflessness* is the true way of Christian living. Thus a Christian should say: "Yes, I covet, I desire the gift of happiness. God planted that desire within me."

But how find the way?

God has shown the way. He sent Christ to teach the way to all who truly seek. When we have found that way we will say in all sincerity, "I do not desire, *and will not accept*, any happiness, any gift, from life, which these my brethren may not have, if they fulfil the conditions I fulfil.

That is the God-centered life. That is the life Christ came to teach and be.

That is the life that will transform this world, so full of strife, and bitterness, and hatred, into a world of brotherliness and human kindness between nations and individual men and women.

Isn't it worth while?

Isn't it worth trying?

God has promised to help us.

WITH WHAT MEASURE

ACTION and reaction are equal, and opposite in direction. That is a scientific law in the material world. It is true also in the world of mind and spirit, as this discourse will endeavor to show.

TEXT.—“*With what measure ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*”—St. Luke VI, 38.

Some years ago I bought a suit of clothing for my little son. It was during the war. The firm was a widely known company having stores in several eastern cities, a firm which wove its own goods, manufactured and retailed its own garments.

Later, when the suit was worn, it proved to be the poorest sort of material. We were then in the state of California, but I cut out a piece of the thread-bare goods and mailed it to the firm with the simple words: “This is from a garment you sold me, after three months’ wear.”

The reply came by return mail: “We admit

the goods are poor, but the material was the best we could obtain at the time because of the war. When you are in the east again come to our store, select anything you choose of equal value, and take it without cost."

When I returned I went to the store, presented their letter, selected another suit, but offered to pay half—as the first had given half service. They refused. "Take it free," they said; "Our goods must satisfy."

That transaction was a loss to the firm. It cost them something. No, on second thought, it was not a loss. They gained a customer for life, clinched. As long as I live and can reach them they shall have my trade.

"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Another illustration, perhaps a trifle humorous.

Some years ago a dear little girl friend met me on the street one day. She was a member of my Church school. She surprised me by breaking out: "I won't buy any more cinnamon buns of Blank & Co."

Naturally I was amused. She was almost in tears; but it soon developed that she was illustrating an eternal truth, so it is not unfitting to introduce this incident into a discourse on that same principle.

The little girl had said: "I won't buy any more cinnamon buns of Blank & Co."

"Why, my child?" said I.

"Because," she replied with emphasis, "they are too stingy of their frosting."

"With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

That firm of bakers was doing business. Like all business houses, it desired to keep and increase its trade. Here was a dissatisfied customer—a small customer it is true, whose present custom was of little account; but that little girl will one day be a woman. She may preside over a household which will mean a considerable profit to the tradesman to whom she goes. There are hundreds of little girls like her. And the tradesman who is, as she said, "stingy of his frosting," will find it doesn't pay to be stingy. In other words the tradesman who does not measure generously to his customers, large and small, is doomed inevitably to lose them, for with what measure he metes it will be measured to him again.

It is sometimes said that you cannot do business on Christian principles. I am not a business man; but good business men, the most successful of business men, have told me this is false. The founder and head of Bradstreet's great Commercial Agency once told me personally

that his observation proved that the majority of failures came from breaking some of the Ten Commandments. He also said that not only the strictest honesty is essential in building up a good and permanent trade, but that, within the limits of reason, that merchant is most successful who treats his customers not only justly but also generously; that it really pays to give down weight, heaping measure, and to be willing to take back cheerfully non-perishable goods. Again Holy Writ says: "Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom; for with the same measure that ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

This principle is universal. We behold it in the world of nature, in social life, in secular life. The farmer who would reap a good crop must sow good seed and plenty of it. More than once I have heard experienced farmers say: "Economy is well, but it never pays to be stingy of your seed. Get the best even though it costs more, for it will repay you in the harvest." Go with me in October through some of the great farming states. Observe two fields of corn, one on either side of the road. Here is one where the corn stands six and eight feet high, strong and stately, great full ears burst-

ing out of the husk with their golden treasure. On the other side of the road is a field of dwarfed and stunted corn, with little starved ears, and none too many of them. The land is the same. Why the difference?

One farmer was wise, the other was not; one measured generously, the other stingily; one sowed the best of seed, and while the corn was growing he cultivated thoroughly; the weeds between the rows were rooted out lest they suck up the rich elements of the soil and starve the roots of the corn. The other farmer did exactly the opposite. He was not careful of his seed in the first place. Then, when the corn appeared above the ground, instead of carefully cultivating it, uprooting the weeds that would draw from its strength, he neglected them. Perhaps, as I saw one farmer do one afternoon in the very midst of the growing season, he slept in his hammock under the apple trees while the weeds were growing in his corn. Expensive sleep that—the harvest told the story. And then the lazy farmer grumbles, and wonders why his neighbor has the better crop. It is as simple as that two and two make four. The one has measured generously to Mother Nature, the other has been stingy; the one has given his fields full measure of seed and labor; the other has given scant measure. Nature had

given back to each as he first gave. The God of Nature said to those men, and says to you and me and all men, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

This truth is one of special value to those in the morning of life. All young men and women have ambitions if they are worth anything at all. They want, rightly, to make the most of their lives. They desire success; they desire to be respected and loved by their companions. These desires are right and natural. But that they may have these things they must pay the price for them, though that price is not in money. They must learn the mighty, all-embracing truth of our text—that with what measure they mete it shall be measured to them again.

Be kind to the world and it will be kind to you. Be unkind to the world and it will be unkind to you. Love and be loved. Hate and be hated. Respect begets respect. Contempt begets contempt. Upon you, upon me, it all depends. With what measure we mete it will be measured to us again.

Therefore permit me to say: put plenty of "icing on your cinnamon buns."

Now this is true not only in the business world and in the world of nature—it is also true in the social world. We all have social relationships, for we must come in contact with those

about us. "No man liveth to himself." No man *can* live to himself. He may try, but if he does he makes a miserable failure of his life and it cannot be called living in any true sense of the word. No man *liveth* to himself—though he may vegetate, he may *exist* to himself, in a measure.

Look at that girl whom everybody loves. Ask yourself why it is so. She may not be especially attractive in person; she may not have any of those things usually supposed to make one popular, such as beauty, wealth, position, or influential friends. Yet everyone likes her; people seem to compete with each other in being kind to her. When you think of her it is always a pleasant thought.

But another comes into your mind who seems friendless and forlorn; people seem rather to avoid her; she appears to be silent, strange, and alone.

Why is it so?

Well, let us be just, it is sometimes diffidence. Diffident people are often misunderstood, esteemed exclusive and unresponsive when really they long for comradeship and do not know how to approach others, or be approachable themselves. But as a rule you will find their difficulty is not lack of wealth or social standing, or physical appearance, for these things

have little to do with the real esteem in which any one is held in this world. The difficulty is in themselves. One measures generously of herself to the world about her, the other stingily; the one metes a full measure of kind words, loving deeds, bright smiles, and cheerful good will. She will not allow herself to be envious or spiteful. The other is the opposite—sour looks, sarcastic remarks, an over-critical spirit, a disagreeable atmosphere about her nearly all the time. One is as sweet-spirited and kind and sunny as a May morning; the other as cold, chilling, and disagreeable as a raw November day.

Now we all like to be liked, that is natural, right, and not un-Christian. But never forget this: the only way to be liked is to be likable. It is written that the man who would have friends must show himself a friend. Don't blame anybody else, you alone are at fault if you are not liked. With what measure ye mete to others they are measuring back to you. They have done it in the past; they will do it in the future. The principle is as true and unchanging as the law which swings the stars in their courses.

Now let us go a little deeper.

We all have ambitions, or ought to have. Pity the young woman or young man who has no thought for the future except the bread and

butter question. Bread and butter are necessary, but the person who thinks of nothing else will never reach a very high plane. The young man who does not aspire to excel, to make something of himself, to be a somebody, who is willing and expects to live on papa's money, is just about as useless as anything one can imagine in this world. The same is true of a young woman. Her sphere is different, though today young women are entering many spheres of life which have hitherto been considered as open only to men. But whatever we aspire to, whether to write books, or to go into business or a profession; whether to teach, or labor at the bench or in the workshop; no matter what we expect to do with our lives, let us always remember this: "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

Recall the two men and the cornfields already mentioned. Youth is the seed time; young manhood and young womanhood are the times when, if we would later reap a bounteous harvest, we must cultivate ourselves in mind and heart. We must root out the weeds in order that the good seed of character and efficiency and culture may grow and flourish, and not be checked by the weeds of idleness and time-wasting and evil habits and damaging associations.

For this reason every ambitious young man

and woman should be careful not to let their pleasures absorb the whole or most of their time and strength in leisure hours. Rightful pleasure is right in rightful measure, but not as the chief thing in life, as many seem to make it. "Pleasure! Pleasure! Good times!" is the cry of the shallow, trivial multitude today. Mark this: good times and wholesome pleasures need not be wrong, with right surroundings and in moderation. Indeed they are useful and even necessary as relaxation. But pleasure is not the *all* of life any more than sweets are the all of food. About the most useless, worthless member of society is the young man or young woman whose chief aim in life is to have what they call a good time.

What will the harvest be?

An empty life, as empty as their vacant faces, as shallow as their shallow brain. An empty old age; no later years of golden harvest with a well-stored, cultivated mind and heart; no achievement, no large success in life, no noble ambition fulfilled, but only emptiness, a barren field and a miserable harvest.

And—a life of mediocrity.

There is an expression one hears much in schools and colleges which is most significant, and even indicative of the mentality of those who seem to live solely for pleasure.

That expression is, "getting by."

Many, it would almost seem the majority of students, appear not to care to excel in their work; they seem to desire only to "get by" in examinations. In my contact with students in recent years, which has been considerable, I recall rarely ever having heard a student say, as they used to say in my own college: "I got a lot out of this course, or that," or, "I didn't seem to get much out of this year's work in a certain branch." Rather the whole question seems to be: "Will I get by?" Or, "Will I be conditioned, and have to take it again?" No apparent desire for getting something out of a course, but only for getting credits—"getting by."

And students like this (if they may be called students) seem to have a special spite against the solid students who do hard and honest work. They call them "grinds," and "grubbers," and "book-worms." Do you know why? The cause is as plain as day to any one with even an elementary knowledge of psychology. These "get bys" are envious, jealous of the fine records made by the solid students—"grinds" as they call them. Unwilling to work, in plain words lazy, too lazy to do hard, solid study, they seek to justify themselves *to* themselves by saying: "Oh yes, the grinds get high marks, but who would be a grind?"

They are inevitably shaping their lives for a future of mediocrity. With what measure they mete it will be measured to them again. There is one significant sentence we read in St. Matt. 29, where it says of Pilate, "He knew that for envy they delivered Him (the Christ)." Those who hated the Master saw in His life a constant rebuke to their own wickedness. Therefore for envy they delivered Him, just as for envy the "get-bys" in college call the solid students "grinds" and "book-worms."

But it is in that highest part of our many-sided nature, the spiritual, that our text most fully applies. No man is truly and completely a man; no woman truly and completely a woman, except there is in them the religious life. Call me narrow if you will, as well as old-fashioned, but life has taught me never fully to trust any man or woman who has no religion, who does not feel a personal responsibility to a personal God to whom they must render account. Many live in this world as though they had only bodies to feed and pamper. Others, on a somewhat higher plane, live as though they had only a body plus a mind. But the full, complete, well rounded man or woman does not forget that he has, rather is, a soul.

That means the religious life as well as the physical and intellectual life; it means one has

self-respect enough to believe he is more than a high-class brute—which those without religion must believe. On this highest side of our life it is above all true that with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. That is, whatever of thought and devotion and real service you put into your religious life, all will come back to you. Your bread cast upon the waters will return; it may be after many days, but it will return, often multiplied many-fold.

You have heard of peace, and joy in the Christian faith. You have heard of that faith being a guide in perplexity, a solace and comfort in all life's vicissitudes, a very tower of strength in time of trouble; yet perhaps you have not found it. Well, we may never expect our religion to be all this to us unless we honestly fulfil its easily understood conditions. They are plain, so plain that he who runs may read. They are simply told in Holy Writ, the life of Christ, and the teachings of the Church.

What are they?

First, Worship. Christ was often found in the temple, and always in the Synagogue on the Day of Worship.

Second, Work. Christ's whole life was to labor for God's kingdom in the world.

Third, Giving. Christ had not where to lay His head, but He gave Himself.

Worship, Work, Giving. These form the trinity of a well-rounded Christian life.

So must it be with us. Religion is the very crown of life, the open door to the infinite. The life without religion is barren, hopeless, without real interest or outlook and uplook; and in our religious life it is supremely true that "With what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again." If we are faithful in *worship*, coming before God's altar to "water that little plant in our souls called reverence," as Oliver Wendell Holmes said; faithful in *work*, doing what we can, for our own Church if possible, if not that, then in our everyday walk in life by kind words and deeds; faithful in *giving*, of our income as we are able, and regularly—as much so as any other regular expense, giving according to our means and not according to our meanness, not cutting off entirely when we must economize, but only reducing here in proportion as we do other expenses; then, if faithful in these three things, we may be sure we are living a genuine Christian life, living as God our Father meant and wants us to live.

Above all, giving ourselves, our hearts, to God, and trying honestly to do His will in some kind of personal service. Measuring thus (and we all know it is true) your religious life will bring you guidance and strength, peace and joy

and comfort, and will be a very tower of strength in the times of trouble and need which are coming—because they come to all in this world.

So this is my message: As you measure to life, so it will measure back to you.

If these things be true, why not do them? Do not go out of this house of God today and forget; but try to translate the impulses now in your hearts into life tomorrow, and all the tomorrows. Let us measure generously, in our physical, our intellectual, and our spiritual lives; let us sow good seed and cultivate it well while it is still today, never doubting that in due time we shall reap if we faint not, and that the harvest will be in exact proportion to the measure with which we mete. Christ said it and Christ knew.

There is an almost perfect illustration of this truth in the world of nature. There are two substances of precisely the same composition, but as wide apart in appearance and value as well could be.

Those two substances are charcoal and the diamond. Both are pure carbon. Yet reflect. How different in value are these two substances. Charcoal is comparatively worthless; the diamond the most precious gem in nature. Charcoal, though useful for certain purposes, is

black, unsightly, and leaves a smudge on your hands if you touch it. A diamond is pure, sparkling, beautiful, fit ornament for the crowns of royalty.

Yet both are carbon, remember, differing simply in crystallization.

Why is one beautiful and one unsightly?

Because one gives back all the light that strikes it, and the other absorbs that light into itself. Charcoal receives the light and keeps it; the diamond receives the light and gives it back in a thousand brilliant colors. Hold up a diamond in the sunlight, turn it about its various facets; it splinters back all the colors of the rainbow. It sparkles, glistens, seems almost a little sun itself. Why? It measures back what is measured to it.

So, precisely, in our lives. Would we make them beautiful in the sight of God and men? Then do not absorb all God's gifts for yourself alone. Do not, like the black, ugly charcoal receive and keep all gifts God bestows.

Give them back to God, which is simply giving them back to God's children in this world. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but do not forget to render to God (and His children) the things that are God's.

There is in our great West a lake known as Great Salt Lake. The water is nearly one fourth

salt—bitter, acrid, useless unless it is chemically treated to rid it of its salt.

Why is that lake so bitter? Because it gets and never gives. Many streams of fresh, sweet mountain water flow into it. Had that lake an outlet, its waters would not be bitter and salt, but clear and sweet.

So with many human lives. They are bitter and acrid—why? Because they have no outlet; they only receive and never give. Give such a life an outlet and it quickly sweetens. Simply another illustration of God's eternal truth, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

My hearers, we need that truth. All the world needs it, even though it may not realize the need. It has within it the healing of the nations as well as of individual lives. God help us to learn it, to live by it every day, that we may find the fulness of life God means for us.

Your life may not have in it all the joy and happiness you have wished. Many deep and bitter disappointments may have come to you. Perhaps you have experienced unfulfilled fruitions which come from no fault on your part, and all the future seems dark.

What then?

Despair? Hopelessness? The bitter cry, "There is no God, nor goodness anywhere"?

Never that—fellow traveler.

God is good, is love, and even now waits to give you the water of life.

Trust thou in God. What other, what better thing is left you?

Fulfill His conditions. He said, "Draw nigh unto Me and I will draw nigh unto thee."

Measure abundantly to Him of service and love. It will all come back to you. For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

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